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Law Enforcement Employees' Experiences of Skillful Recognition by Leaders

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Abstract

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MS, Pfeiffer University, 2000

BA, Johnson C. Smith University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The performance of public agency employees and their management teams have long been subject to critical comments and public doubt. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of police leaders and staff with regard to skillful recognition of excellent performance within the profession. Twenty law enforcement employees, including leaders, sworn officers, and nonuniformed civilian employees in southwestern North Carolina, consented to in-depth, semistructured interviews concerning their lived experiences. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory was the conceptual framework for this study. A modified van Kaam analysis resulted in the identification of 5 significant, but broad, themes. The themes were: motivation, leadership, leader-employee communication, recognition, and leader-employee relationship. The responses of the participants that clustered within the themes provided unique insight based on the participants' experiences concerning the environment of an effective recognition program in law enforcement and the skills leaders use to encourage excellent performance. The emergent themes align with expectations in LMX theory and most of existing literature and current thought concerning employee recognition and the skills leaders need to master to be effective encouragers of excellent performance. Thus the findings support much of the existing body of research while adding insight into the unique environment of law enforcement. This study has the potential of contributing to positive social change because researchers and law enforcement leaders could gain valuable insights about how to encourage and recognize excellent performance. This in turn could contribute to more effective and courteous policing and, thus, better service to the community and the general public. Other types of public agency researchers and management teams could also learn from these insights, resulting in potentially broad benefits to society.

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Dedication

I give all thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His unconditional love, grace, and mercy. Without Him, the completion of this project would not have manifested. I dedicate this dissertation in loving memory of my maternal and paternal grandmothers, Marie Bailey and Nellie Patterson. Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful daughter Taylor Necole and my husband Danny for being a sounding board as I dealt with scholarly obstacles, tolerating my frustration, and encouraging me to not prematurely end the journey. Although my experience, good or bad, effected our home environment, you never stopped loving and supporting me. Thank you for allowing me to sacrifice precious time with you to work on my project. To my parents, Allen and Brenda, thank you for always believing in me and encouraging me to take on difficult challenges. Because of your love, discipline, and support, I am equipped to remove hurdles and overcome obstacles, resulting in me achieving my established goals. You built the foundation for me to construct my success and I am who I am today because of you. To my one and only sister, Chelsea, thank you for your ongoing encouragement and believing in me to fulfill one of my biggest academic dreams. God strategically chose you to be my sister to help me stay focused on pertinent things according to His Will. As my spiritual mentor and friend, I say, “thank you.” To other family members and friends, thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement. Completing my Doctorate Degree was a chosen destiny filled with many highs and lows; nevertheless, I persevered. “To whom much is given, much is required.” I am now better equipped to take on the challenge.

Acknowledgements

I extend a heartfelt thank you to my research chairperson, Dr. Anne Davis, for your remarkable guidance, support, and endurance during this journey. You kept me motivated and encouraged during difficult times and words cannot explain how your level of support influenced my decision to complete the doctoral program and successfully achieve the highest level of academia. I extend a special thank you to my second committee member, Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, for your support, words of wisdom, feedback, and tireless pursuit of excellence. Thank you for your ongoing contributions to my study. To Dr. Gene Fusch, Dr. Richard Synder, and Dr. Freda Turner, your guidance, level of support, and consistent encouragement enabled me to compose a quality dissertation and successfully complete the challenging Doctorate of Business Administration journey. I extend my immense gratitude to my study participants for their willingness to support by sharing their experience as it relates to my dissertation topic. Without your engagement, this study would not exist. Most importantly, to my family and friends, thank you for your continued prayers as you watched me grow and develop into a prosperous scholar.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee recognition is a highly effective motivational approach that is gaining considerable attention (Feys, Anseel, & Willie, 2013). Peter and Eunice (2014) defined employee recognition as a benefit in the form of increased compensation, bonuses, and promotions, conferred as public recognition for enhanced performance. Additionally, employee recognition may have a powerful effect on employees' attitudes toward the organization and job performance. Offering recognition increases the frequency of an employee's desired actions to enhance productivity (Peter & Eunice, 2014). The more employees receive recognition, the more they commit to the organization (Peter & Eunice, 2014). In the business world, enhancing employee performance in an organization receives attention from leaders and employees, as leaders realize they have to engage with their employees to achieve organizational goals (Fachrunnisa, Adhiatma, & Mutaminah, 2014). To obtain insight regarding employee recognition, I explored the skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity.

Background of the Problem

Despite implementation of various drivers of performance, such as rewards, maintaining employee productivity can be challenging (Johnson, 2014). In the organizational environment, there is extensive concern regarding effective leaders while leaders neglect the subject of effective followers, even though 80% of employees function as followers who need continuous growth (Malakyan, 2013). Individuals may perceive the recognition that leaders extend to employees as effective leadership abilities and beneficial to both leaders and employees. Leaders who focus on the welfare of their employees create a positive environment, and recognition has a positive impact on followers' perceptions of their leader and their willingness to follow their leaders' requests (Graf, Schuh, Quaquebeke, & Dick, 2012).

Providing ongoing feedback and recognition to employees that improve performance could be a key driver of employee motivation. Receiving feedback on performance creates a positive and motivating experience for employees (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, & Stine, 2011). As members of a paramilitary organization with leaders who oversee their actions (Johnson, 2011), law enforcement officers and employees encounter many facets of crime, toxicity, and stress (Feemster, 2010). While law enforcement leaders instruct their employees to perform certain tasks and discipline them for failing to comply, high-ranking leaders within police agencies also reward employees for their compliance (Johnson, 2011).

Problem Statement

In the organizational environment, recognition by leaders enhances employee motivation and productivity (Sawalha & Zaitouni, 2012). According to Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2014), 60% of motivated employees exceed performance levels, exhibit positive attitudes, and strive to increase work productivity. The general business problem was that employees received limited recognition by leaders for contributions to organizational success, leading to decreased employee performance. The specific business problem was that some leaders lacked the skills to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. Twenty law enforcement employees, comprising 10 leaders and 10 employees within a patrol division at a police department in southwestern North Carolina, participated in in-depth, semistructured telephone interviews. The results of this study may lead to the enhancement of leadership training and organizational processes related to rewards and praise, which would enable law enforcement leaders to implement developmental programs that improve officer-citizen relationships. The leadership training could enhance employee skills regarding community policing resulting in a positive social change that inspires citizens to build positive relationships with police officers, thereby creating safer communities.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological design to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. While attempting to comprehend multifaceted and complex events, researchers use qualitative research methods to describe study information informed by explanatory, critical, and thorough investigations (Leko, 2014). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study, rather than quantitative or mixed methods, as collecting data from an exploratory perspective allowed participants to share their workplace experience related to recognition without the constraint of forced-choice questions. Barnham (2012) argued that in comparison to qualitative research, there are different approaches to the quantitative method with differing intended goals and competing visions of what constitutes truth. Harrison (2013) noted that quantitative methods entail examining relationships between specific variables to answer questions of who, where, how many, and how much. Quantitative researchers test and verify or reject hypotheses (Vasquez, 2014). For this study, relevancy of defined variables and statistical inferences did not exist as I explored participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon. Additionally, I did not test a hypothesis in this exploratory study.

Mixed methods researchers combine qualitative and quantitative techniques for instrument and theory development or address exploratory and confirmatory questions simultaneously (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The mixed methods approach enables researchers to improve the rigor and explanation of the research results by utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods within the same study (Ahmad & Yunos, 2012). Due to the nature of the research question for this study, mixed methods was not appropriate, considering data collection did not include the quantitative component for instrument or theory development.

Qualitative research encompasses different research designs. Hays and Wood (2011) recognized the five types of qualitative research design as phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, narrative, and ethnography studies. Erickson (2012) argued that case study designs are useful to analyze a real and complicated business issue. Case study designs can be deductive or inductive and are useful particularly to explore a single exception that may show the interpretation to be false (Lokke & Sorensen, 2014). Additionally, case study designs allow researchers to employ an exploratory case to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon or to create new ideas (Yin, 2013). Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case with the intent to explore the complexity of the study topic (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Although case study is an appropriate design for this study, conducting a case study was not the optimal design, considering I explored lived experiences of several law enforcement employees versus analyzing a single or collective complex business matter. Although a small sample may be feasible for some case studies, I chose to conduct semistructured interviews with a minimum of 20 participants to gather in-depth data from participants within a single police department. I anticipated reluctance of police department leaders to allow access to multiple data sources on police related topics making a case study infeasible.

Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012) described narrative research as data collection from multiple sources to provide an in-depth story. Narrative researchers use a variety of purposive sampling methods, in addition to observation, visual media, and documents can supplement primary interview data during data collection (Hays & Wood, 2011). The phenomenological design enables researchers to conduct live interviews with participants, whereas researchers who use the narrative design seek to comprehend the human experience through interpretation of narrative forms of qualitative data (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012). My goal as the researcher was not to gain knowledge through interpretations of narrative description, but rather through the real-life experiences of each participant. Using a narrative design would not have enabled me to focus on the topic under study. Narrative research was not appropriate for this study since the participants included a select group of individuals who expressed their perceptions of the same phenomena. Ethnographic researchers identify social patterns and describe and interpret a culture-sharing group (Hays & Wood, 2011). The ethnography approach requires lengthy engagement and persistent observation of study participants (Hays & Wood, 2011). Ethnography involves examining the shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language within a group through observation (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The ethnographic approach was not feasible considering the absence of a focus on distinct cultural elements in the research process.

Using the phenomenological design, the researcher can study patterns to form meaning and themes from a common phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Observation coupled with interviews may be an effective method of data collection; however, considering the sensitive nature of police work, selecting the option to conduct telephone interviews rather than observing employees while on duty was viable for this study. In comparison to other research designs, I chose to use the phenomenological approach since data collection was obtainable through in-depth interviews versus observation.

Conducting in-depth interviews through a phenomenological design allows participants to share experiences (Hay & Wood, 2011).

Research Question

The central research question that guided this study was: *What skills do leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity?*

Interview Questions

The interview questions for leaders were as follows:

1. How do you recognize employees for increased productivity?

2. What skills do you use to recognize employees to help improve their productivity?

3. How do these skills influence how you recognize employees in your organization?

4. As a leader, what type of recognition do you extend to employees for good performance?

5. How do you motivate employees to perform exemplary acts?

6. What types of recognition motivate your employees?

7. What skills do you need to improve your ability to recognize your employees?

8. What is your experience regarding rewards and feedback you extend to employees for increased employee productivity?

9. What type of relationship exists between you and an employee when you recognize your employees for high performance?

10. What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to share?

The interview questions for employees were as follows:

1. How does your current leader recognize employees for increased productivity?

2. What skills does your leader use to recognize employees to improve productivity?

3. How do your leaders' skills influence how that leader recognizes you?

4. In your current role, what type of recognition do you receive from your leader for good performance?

5. What skills does your leader possess that motivate you to perform exemplary acts?

6. What types of recognition motivate you to perform exemplary acts?

7. What skills does your leader demonstrate that ensures employee performance is recognized?

8. What is your experience regarding recognition you receive for increased employee productivity?

9. What type of relationship exists between you and your leader when your leader recognizes you for high performance?

10. What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to add to this study?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was the leader-member exchange theory (LMX). LMX theorists attempt to explain the nature and predict the consequences of high and low-quality relationships between leaders and their employees (Geertshuis, Morrison, Cooper-Thomas, 2015). Shweta and Srirang (2013) suggested that the basis of LMX is through social exchange, reciprocity, and organizational roles and emerged as a critical factor in fostering internal competitiveness within organizations. Outcomes of LMX include enhanced productivity, overall satisfaction, and commitment, all of which augment organizational effectiveness (Shweta & Srirang, 2013).

The concept of LMX evolved out of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), social exchange (Blau, 1964), similarity-attraction (Byrne, 1971), and organizational roles (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Reciprocity is necessary for fostering LMX relationships and stabilizing social systems (Shweta & Srirang, 2013). As an extension of the norms of reciprocity, social exchange refers to a dyadic relation between two people according to duties evolving out of an extension of courtesies and completion of tasks (Shweta & Srirang, 2013). Similar to attraction, people tend to share positive interactions with individuals who are more or less alike. Organizational roles entail the specifications of duties, communication patterns, hierarchical relationships, and informal norms and expectations (Shweta & Srirang, 2013). LMX theory was appropriate as the conceptual framework for this study illuminating the links in the relationship between leaders and employees.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definition of terms and an explanation of each word's significance throughout this study.

Civilian employees. Civilian employees within a law enforcement organization refer to law enforcement personnel that conduct administrative and clerical tasks, freeing sworn officers to devote more attention to field duties (McCarty & Skogan, 2012).

Community policing. Community policing is building a strong relationship with the community, attacking fear of crime via enhancing neighborhood quality of life, empowering police officers to focus on issues rather than incidents, and decentralizing authority (Davis, Ortiz, Euler, & Kuykendall, 2015).

Followership. Followership refers to an interactive position an individual carries that enhances the leadership role (Chou, 2012). Antelo, Prilipko, and Sheridan-Pereira (2010) defined followership as a design to coordinate a person actions or goals with that of another person, the leader, to promote the leader's proximate goals. In a followership framework, leaders contribute characteristics to employees depending on the individual and external attributions to the matter.

Leadership. Leadership is a phenomenon that obtains the voluntary support of employees and is an organizational topic that has intrigued researchers for centuries (Ruiz, Ruiz, & Martinez, 2011). According to Defee, Stank, Esper, and Mentzer (2009), leadership is the process of influencing individuals to accomplish goals. Leaders teach individuals how to influence people and make the leader successful in reaching personal and organizational goals through success, effectiveness, and productivity (Malakyan, 2013).

Recognition. Recognition is an expression of appreciation given to individuals who offer desired behaviors (Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013).

Rewards. Rewards are an important factor in incentive schemes, which many organizations use (Presslee, Vance, & Webb, 2013). To reward an employee means to stimulate performance (Rousseau & Aube, 2014). Rewards can be tangible such as cash, points, gift cards, merchandise, and travel or nontangible, such as praise and verbal recognition.

Sworn officers. Sworn officers interact with the general public, make emotional connections with community citizens or suppress emotions when being exposed to information about crime, and occupy a higher stratum in the police hierarchy than civilian employees (McCarty & Skogan, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are concepts that individuals perceive as true without additional investigation or questioning (Jansson, 2013). The following four assumptions guided this research study. The first assumption was that during the interview process all study participants answered each question honestly and in full detail. Second, I assumed that participants displayed a level of interest in the study and provided quality information. Third, I assumed that the collection of valuable information could increase the opportunity to address a gap in business practice regarding the topic. Fourth, I assumed that telephone interviews would garner satisfactory results, and exploration of potential restrictions might include interpreting pauses and inviting participants to explain further.

Limitations

Limitations are attributes that can influence the findings of study results (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). I noted two limitations in this study. I was not able to generalize the results of this study to police departments in other counties, cities, or states, or observe study participants in action.

Delimitations

Delimitations are intended boundaries in the research analysis process (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012). I noted the following delimitations for this study: first, study participants worked for an organization based in North Carolina. Second, all study participants worked in the law enforcement industry. Third, study participants had at least 1 year of employment at the organization at the time of the data collection process.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

A proactive personality is a vital dispositional antecedent of proactive behavior at work (Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). Organizational leaders focus on proactive personality research, such as a leader's role in forming the relationship between employee proactive personality and work outcomes (Zhang et al., 2012). Proactive behaviors relate to key organizational success indicators, such as organizational performance (Bergeron et al., 2014). Proactive personality is a substantial personality trait that relates to taking personal initiative and behaving proactively (Bergeron, Schroeder, & Martinez, 2014). Zhang, Wang, and Shi (2012) reported that employees and leaders who demonstrate proactive personalities look to improve current circumstances and recognize and act on the opportunities discovered. Employees and leaders demonstrate initiative, take authority, and persevere until changes occur, while leaders heavily influence employees' initiative-taking (Zhang et al., 2012).

Results from this study may assist in identifying skills leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. According to Zhang et al. (2012), leaders' responses to employees' enthusiasm are necessary for proactive employees' work outcomes. Considering proactivity is a key factor to gaining a competitive advantage, a researcher's objective should be to conduct a study to reveal the antecedents of proactive employee behavior (Carson, Baker, & Lanier, 2014). If leaders reward and recognize employees for their contributions to the organization, employee motivation levels could increase, which could result in enhanced productivity. Leaders should acknowledge employees' proactive behavior, which may influence their performance evaluations positively. Such formalization of recognition is a strong motivator for high performance (Zhang et al., 2012).

Exploring the congruence of employees' and leaders' proactive personalities may be critical to an organization. Proactive personality researchers determined that relationships exist between a person's self-efficacy, knowledge, skills, and ability

(Carson et al., 2014). Researchers did not focus on the effects of personality congruence between employees and leaders; instead, these researchers focused on the likeness in effect-related traits between employees and leaders (Frese & Fay, 2001). Prior to 2001, proactive personality researchers did not include how leaders recognize employees for their contributions (Frese & Fay, 2001). A fit between employees and leaders regarding personality could improve work outcomes, which could result in leaders recognizing employees for contributions to the organization.

When leaders inspire specific company values, beliefs, and other moral cognitive structures in employees, the inspiration creates motivation for employees (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011). Individuals view motivation as a source of positive energy that influences employees' lives while at work (Hauser, 2014). According to Hannah, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2011), limited studies exist where researchers investigated the relationship between moral courage, recognition, and prosocial behavior. Hannah et al. defined prosocial behavior as behaviors that go further than definite role requirements and exhibit actions to guard both the organization and employees' interests. Telle and Pfister (2012) defined prosocial behavior as voluntary and willful behavior yielding benefits for others. Few researchers have explored if employee positiveness, which may result from recognition, is likely to enhance performance.

Hannah et al. (2011) suggested that the demonstration of prosocial behavior is through exemplary acts that individuals execute. The behavior causes individuals to form and cultivate the well-being and integrity of others, share, cooperate, respect, and treat employees with dignity. The aforementioned perspective exemplifies prosocial behavior as intentional behavior that influences an individual's moral courage. According to Berman, Levine, Barasch, and Small (2015), employees engage in prosocial behavior to attract others to regard their actions favorably. Employees receive powerful influence from leaders regarding leaders' thoughts and behaviors as they relate to moral courage (Hannah et al., 2011). Employees perceive authentic leaders as being high in ethical perspective and self-awareness. In addition, employees perceive authentic leaders as practicing equal and fair decision making, openness, and transparency, which could influence the context in matters that support employees' moral courage (Hannah et al., 2011).

Organizational leaders may enhance business practices if leaders provide ongoing feedback and recognition to employees to direct and enhance job performance (Mone et al., 2011). Employees perceive leaders to be role models who set norms and expectations that influence employees' thoughts and behaviors (Hannah et al., 2011). Receiving recognition is usually a positive and motivating experience and employees may view recognition as a form of feedback rooted in positive reinforcement (Mone et al., 2011). Recognition is a motivating experience resulting in increased employee engagement, satisfaction, and morale, which indicates recognition links to employee performance and organizational success (Mone et al., 2011).

Implications for Social Change

As a result of positive social change, law enforcement leaders may desire to create an environment where employees do not passively await leaders' decisions but drive their own decision making. Research on workplace environment and turnover intention of police officers includes limited information on organizational and individual factors that link to social support, job motivation, and public service motivation (Lambert et al., 2015). In existing literature, job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state with regard to the type of approach to a job situation (Pomirleanu & John Mariadoss, 2015). Organizational environment affects employee work attitudes of job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational and community commitment (Lambert et al., 2015). High levels of motivation and organizational commitment link to lower rates of employee turnover, and higher levels of job performance, while fostering positive relations with citizens of the community (Johnson, 2015). These positive relationships might entice citizens and businesses to relocate to the area thereby increasing the tax base of the local community.

Law enforcement agency leaders seek to enhance their community's safety by analyzing data to identify problems and measure results (Wolf, 2012). Law enforcement personnel and community citizens find interest in the practice and theory of community policing, which serves as a mechanism for reducing crime and enhancing community satisfaction between citizens and police officers (Lynch & Stretesky, 2013). Although community policing may influence positively crime rates and increase community satisfaction, law enforcement leaders express concern regarding disruptive justice issues as a result of empowering community citizens to engage in community policing (Lynch & Stretesky, 2013). Police officers could increase efforts to establish positive relationships with citizens, which might lead to enhanced trust and community stability between officers and citizens. According to participants' responses, motivated employees who have a positive relationship with their leader demonstrated a higher level of work-related involvement, which could enhance officer-citizen relationships within the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This section of the study entails the literature review process used to explore various leadership styles and the effects of employee recognition. I explored employees' and leaders' perceptions regarding skills leaders used to recognize employees for commendable acts that contributed to the accomplishments of their organizations. Contents of this literature review entailed various sources, including scholarly journals, seminal books, and peer-reviewed articles to provide the reader with a full in-depth background of the research available pertaining to the study topic. For this study, the following search terms guided my research: *follower*, *followership*, *leader*, *leadership*, *employee*, *recognition*, *leadership types*, *rewards*, *leadership theories*, and *employee motivation*. The strategy used for searching the literature was selecting topics that complemented each other regarding the highlights and flaws of employee recognition. I gathered information from the following databases: (a) ABI Inform/Complete, (b)

ProQuest Research Library: Business, and (c) EBSCOhost. The study included 343 sources composed of peer-reviewed articles, non peer-reviewed articles, and seminal books. Included within these total sources are 331 peer-reviewed sources (97%) and 322 (94%) sources published within the last 5 years. I gathered reference information from 105 resources for the literature review, of which 94 (90%) were peer-reviewed articles and 90 (86%) were published between 2012 and 2016. In addition, the literature review included 11 (10.5%) non peer-reviewed articles.

An organization where leaders create a caring environment would be a workplace that frames work as a location where employees can realize their potential via their work (Islam, 2013). According to Islam (2013), the manner in which organizational leaders recognized employees depended on the form of recognition given. Empirical researchers have consistently demonstrated that the use of employee recognition produces positive results in organizations (Feys et al., 2013). Recognition is vital in the organizational environment as a tool to create high productivity (Sawalha & Zaitouni, 2012). Recognition is the main objective of sustaining the feeling of involvement and being a meaningful element of the organization (Sawalha & Zaitouni, 2012).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. Employees’ and leaders’ input regarding recognition and leader-employee relationships assisted in discovering how leaders recognized employees for contributions to their organization. In this study, I explored skills leaders used to recognize employees and how leaders recognized employees for their job performance. The research question that guided this study was: *What skills do leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity?*

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

LMX exemplifies a differential social exchange practice involving supervisors and employees (Shweta & Srirang, 2013). Thacker and Stoner (2012) explained LMX to be the relationship between a leader and employee, which entails the exchange of equivalent resources. Thomas, Martin, and Riggio (2013) reported that the theory of LMX was the first to emphasize that leadership was not only a top-down process instead, leadership is a reciprocal relationship in which leaders and followers mutually influence each other. Li and Liao (2014) suggested that leaders develop close and high-quality relationships with some employees according to trust and respect. Additionally, LMX theory is dependent on the premise that leaders differentiate among their employees and maintain a distant relationship (Li & Liao, 2014).

Kunze and Gower (2012) indicated that in the year 2000, researchers, such as Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, and Taylor, linked LMX quality to several positive outcomes for both employees and organizations. Employees experiencing high-quality LMX receive recognition in the form of salary progression and promotions. Conversely, employees with lower quality LMX do not receive equal recognition; however, these employees are susceptible to untrue promises (Kunze & Gower, 2012). Organizational inconsistencies regarding promises made to employees by leaders result in negative work behavior (Kunze & Gower, 2012).

Liang-Chieh and Wen-Ching (2015) argued that one factor regarding LMX and performance is that the LMX relationship is dependent on employee competence, dependability, and achievement. Employees who demonstrate a high-level of engagement in their work accomplish work assignments, perform at higher levels, and receive resources and support from their leader (Liang-Chieh & Wen-Ching, 2015). Employees who have high-quality relationships with their leaders are in an advantageous position of gaining access to the leader's attention and support as opposed to an employee with a low quality relationship (Anand, Vidyarthi, Erdogan, Liden, & Chaudhry, 2014). Employees in low LMX relationships receive fewer social and economic benefits as compared to individuals in high LMX relationships regarding social and economic exchange (Nie & Lamsa, 2015).

Employee Recognition

The nature of employee recognition may be fundamental to workplace mental health. The lack of employee recognition is the second-largest risk factor for emotional distress in the workplace (Brun & Dugas, 2008). Emotional distress is a key aspect of an employee's ability to handle difficult professional situations. Basic intrinsic and acquired rewards may be determinants of organizational performance and motivation and serve as a predictor of organizational performance (Brun & Dugas, 2008). Employees will produce high productivity and adjust themselves to their organizations' objectives if they engage in good relationships, effective communication, power, and independence.

Individuals with high levels of organizational commitment possess a desire to dedicate greater efforts toward an organizations goals and objectives (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013). Employees' initial confidence in a leader's thoughts and feelings determine the level of respect employees possess for their leader. Employees trusting leaders is one element for organizations to foster and trust is a necessary component in judging how employees view their relationship with leaders (Holland, Cooper, Pyman, & Teicher, 2012). According to Brun and Dugas (2008), recognition is a benefit expected by employees and entails two main elements: recognition from the perspective of acknowledgment and recognition of the certainty of the employees' contributions to their organization.

Employee Motivation

In employee-leader relationships, individuals demonstrate how employees expect trust from leaders and are not inspired by what leaders think they would want, instead what each specific individual wants (Bjugstad Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006). Leaders need to appreciate employees by sharing power, knowledge, success, and failure with them (Tebeian, 2012). Crippen (2012) stated that leaders and followers elevated one another to higher levels of motivation, morality, and ethics. Internal motivation of employees can drive them to success when leaders communicate trust and respect for their employees' abilities to achieve and perform. Recognition is a vital component of motivation (Brun & Dugas, 2008). Many employees determine their commitment to an organization by reflecting on how hard they work, the type of recognition or reward they receive, and the value of the reward. Leadership effectiveness may be precariously contingent on the leader’s ability to motivate employees toward a collective goal, mission, or vision.

The relationship employees share with leaders may depend on employees’ motivation. Motivating language is a useful predictor of imperative employee and workplace outcomes (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012). If personal characteristics match up or are similar, the motivational need for empowerment may not be as high as employees whose motivation stems from the connection with leaders. The concept of making individuals aware of the relevance of their function may be an imperative ingredient to motivating employees in a broad sense. Offering meaning and challenges to employees’ work might encourage them to visualize an impressive future. Conversely, a relevant reason for negative emotions, resulting in decreased work performance, is the lack of trust employees have for leaders within an organization (Zineldin & Hytter, 2012). The three conditions that need to exist for employees to demonstrate high motivation levels include: (a) the employee must have the mindset and confidence that they can do the job leaders expect them to perform, (b) leader trustworthiness to connect results to performance, and (c) employees need gratification with the outcomes they receive (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Followership plays a critical role at every level of an organization (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

Leaders’ effort to motivate employees to inherit a compelling vision may result in an advanced level of perceived value compliance. Leroy, Palanski, and Simons (2012) argued that leader integrity encourages employee performance. Leader emotions have both functional and dysfunctional influences on responses to the organization and employee behavior, whereas individual well-being in organizations is dependent on inner relationships between leaders and employees (Zineldin & Hytter, 2012). Leaders' emotional displays may have the potential to influence the way their employees feel, think, and behave. This is because leaders have a discerning impact on the operation of organizations and their employees. Rewarding and motivating employees is crucial to organizations because employees are a critical resource for success (Kowalewski & Phillips, 2012).

Grant (2012) argued that a task for leaders was to motivate employees to achieve substantial accomplishments. Leaders need to motivate and reward employees to ensure employees recognize how vital they are to the organization (Kowalewski & Phillips, 2012). Leaders who influence, inspire, and refine their employees' performance make a tremendous difference to the quality of work and level of employee productivity (Olughor & Oke, 2014). The relationship shared between leaders and employees could influence how leaders and employees view and respect each role. Leaders may view employees as an indistinguishable group of individuals falling subject to leaders' wishes (Defee, Stank, Esper, & Mentzer, 2009).

Employee Rewards

Rewards for individual performance or group performance may be antecedents of empowerment and an effective motivational tool. Meaningful recognition influences individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Lefton, 2012). Validating employees for their organizational contributions by offering incentives, rewards, and recognition may influence employee motivation. Failure to recognize employees leads to a circumstance of invisibility or alienation (Islam, 2012). In many cases, employees cannot identify a clear connection between their actions, performance at higher levels, and their resultant rewards (Kowalewski & Phillips, 2012). Performance-based rewards may have a positive effect on employees' perceived ability and mitigate organizations' high expectations. Employees are aware of their significance in an organization and are motivated to perform when they receive recognition from leaders (Kowalewski & Phillips, 2012). Expectations may include making employees feel forced to work at an accelerated pace because their pay will depend on their performance.

Understanding the Needs of Employees

Employees expect leaders to give as well as receive when building a positive relationship in the workplace (Cole, 2011). Additionally, employees assume leaders will define organizational policies and practices that endeavor to promote long-term economic, social, and environmental well-being (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2015). Depending on the behavior of leaders, employees will decide how much they are willing to contribute to the organization or team (Cole, 2011). If a leader's performance fails to meet employee expectations, employees may develop a relaxed attitude and not carry out duties fully.

Leaders form, maintain, and terminate unique exchange relationships with each of their employees over time (Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, & McKenna, 2014). Cole (2011) stressed that understanding employees have a defined set of needs is critical for leaders to recognize. If leaders fail to identify the needs of employees, the lack of recognition could lead to a reduction in motivation. In today's demanding and complex global working environment, there is growing evidence to suggest that organizations identify the impact leadership has on employee well-being and organizational outcomes (Samad, Reaburn, Davis, & Ahmed, 2015). The strength and quality of the relationship between employees and leaders could diminish when the needs of employees lack attention. Individuals may view leaders as people who possess a powerful ability to control the facts of their respective organization. Employees look for open communication with their leaders. Without workplace communication, accomplishing organizational tasks is impossible (Conrad, 2014).

Leader/Employee Relationship

An effort to comprehend the phenomenon of leadership and the attraction the influence draws to the business world relates to individuals in leadership roles. Antelo et al. (2010) suggested that employees make up an estimated 80% of the success of organizations and leaders contribute a maximum of 20% to organizational success; thus, all successful leaders must first learn how to follow other employees in the workplace. Traditionally, employees react to leaders' actions; however, leaders are also employees and employees exhibit leadership. Hernes and Braenden (2012) argued that employees are recipients of leaders' authority. Smothers, Absher, and White (2012) reported that although followers represent a substantial source of variance in the emergence of leaders, followers are not the focus of leadership research. According to Antelo et al., employees' significance in the leadership process is not clear. Upcoming sections of this study included a review of charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership. Additionally, identification of leadership characteristics and skills as they related to leaders recognizing employees will be discussed.

Perry, Witt, Penney, and Atwater (2010) reported that an employee's immediate leader is one of the most influential people in that person's work life. The relationship employees have with their immediate leader may affect work performance, attitudes, and well-being. Leader and employee emotions are critical aspects of organizational life that determine the effectiveness of leader-employee relationships (Zineldin & Hytter, 2012). Employees may feel fatigue resulting from leader actions and decision making. Both actions and decision making, good or bad, can be contagious in the workplace and can be costly to organizations and individuals resulting in high employee turnover and low job performance (Perry, Witt, Penney, & Atwater, 2010).

Decisions and choices leaders make in leader-employee relationships may cause employees to suffer harm by leaders (Perry et al., 2010). Leaders might create advantages for a group of employees to the detriment of other employees resulting in the favored group to benefit from additional attention, support, and guidance from leaders (Ioan, 2013). Decisions could range from changing an employee's work schedule to requesting employees to perform duties outside their job description (Perry et al., 2010). If leaders show a passive concern for their employees, subordinates may not develop a sense of trust for leaders. Employees expect leaders to be honest and show concern; otherwise, employees may view leaders as unreliable (Perry et al., 2010).

In leader-employee relationships, tolerance is the ability to accept a situation while disapproving the situation simultaneously (Antelo et al., 2010). Leaders instruct employees to demonstrate a reasonable amount of tolerance when working individually or as a team (Antelo et al., 2010). Researchers have demonstrated that the leader's attention on the collective is vital for employees' responses to that person's leader (Graf et al., 2012). Tolerance signifies employees’ support of the application, actions, or decisions executed by management and employees regardless of their basic disagreement with such actions (Antelo et al., 2010). Employees need to demonstrate a full understanding of project related processes, goals, reasons for, and consequences of a task (Antelo et al., 2010). Employees who do not comprehend fully should seek advice from their leader regarding tasks (Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013). Employees should form their own liberated critical thinking and aim for ongoing learning (Antelo et al., 2010).

Followership and leadership are a joint effort to demonstrate how employees and leaders represent their organization. Two main characters exist in a leader-employee relationship: both the leader and employee (Ruiz et al., 2011). Relationships leaders share with employees influence employees’ work efforts (Ioan, 2013). Organizational leaders should acknowledge the effectiveness of employees’ roles and the influence employees have on their organization (Ruiz et al., 2011). The relevance of relationships between leaders and employees can be critical to the achievements of both leaders and employees and to the organization's success.

Followership Styles and Leadership Styles

According to Greyvenstein and Cilliers (2012), leaders need to organize themselves in matrix systems, moving between different types and styles of leadership, managing complicated and diverse interpersonal relationships, and dealing with a frequently changing organizational identity. Early followership theorists insisted the leader-employee relationship was a mutually dependent relationship with a shared influence process (Baker, Mathis, & Stites-Doe, 2011). Leaders develop individual relationships with employees that vary depending on the quality of the relationship (Ioan, 2013). Researchers have uncovered that employees seek engagement with an achievement within their organization (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

Tangpinyoputtikhun and Tiparos (2011) argued that the challenge for leaders in effective organizations is to pair successfully leadership characteristics with the behavior of employees. In addition, an employee's behavior is one of the contextual components that influences leadership style. Conversely, employees interpret the meaning of leaders' behavior and form their own interpretation of their relationships with leaders (Graves & Luciano, 2013). Tangpinyoputtikhun and Tiparos also suggested that researchers encounter challenges in assessing the connection between leadership style and employee behavior that results in higher work performance. Managers, who perceive and mimic authentic ethical leadership, foster a positive leader-employee relationship (Tangpinyoputtikhun & Tiparos, 2011).

Encouraging employees to take an active role in decision making may encourage engagement by making employees a part of the process. Employees who appreciate interpersonal relations may pair up with relationship-oriented leaders who can satisfy some of their interpersonal needs by recognizing employee contributions, which could influence organization success. Leadership styles form depending on different measures, such as decision making sharing and the relationship between a leader and an employee (Chou, 2012). Employees who value accomplishment and structure may work well with task-oriented leaders because task-oriented leaders provide stability and security for employees (Chou, 2012). Effective employees demonstrate enthusiasm and self-reliant participation in the quest for organizational goals. A leader's displayed emotions may influence employees' perceived reactions to their supervisor, thus influencing their behavior (Kafetsios, Nezlek, & Vassiou, 2011). Leaders' use of emotions could have a positive affiliation with employees' work emotionality and attitudes, whereas, leaders' emotion managing and self-emotion appraisal can have an adverse relation to employees' emotion and work attitudes.

Followership

Many organizations focus on leader behavior although individuals view employees as storage boxes for leader instructions, meaning employees receive instruction and execute demands from leaders (Defee et al., 2009). Engaging in leader-like rather than follower-like behaviors comprises the coproduction of leadership, which involves leaders and followers working collaboratively to affect organizational outcomes (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013). In the formal study of leadership theory, the term followership implies a central leader who serves as a source of guidance, inspiration, and authority (Defee et al., 2009). Followership can be difficult to comprehend outside the framework of leadership. Cunha, Rego, Clegg, and Neves (2013) argued that followership and leadership are thus relational classes rather than absolutes and expressed their characteristics in relation to each other. Isolation from criticism and feedback can be one of a leader's greatest liabilities. Firms print countless leadership publications annually, whereas followership garners little attention resulting in people viewing employees as an equivalent group of individuals falling subject to leader desires (Defee et al., 2009).

Among practitioners, the subject of followership does not receive a high level of appreciation, and followership is not a popular subject in the academic literature (Bjugstad et al., 2006). The topic of employees does not receive a high-level of consideration (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Followership has become increasingly vital within organizations as literature on followership evolves. Baker, Mathis, and Stites-Doe (2011) suggested four key components that determine the basis of followership. The first component is that employees are active, second, employees and leaders are roles, not genetic dispositions, third, employees and leaders share a common purpose, and fourth, the employee-leader relationship is an interdependent relationship. Changes in the workplace also highlight the need for analyzing followership in detail, and modifications are necessary as organizations seek innovative avenues to select, train, and lead employees for increased productivity.

Flexibility is a necessary ingredient for both leaders and employees when dealing with an overall approach to work. Although scholars are beginning to study followership closely, the current matter is less evident in the business world. Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, and Morris (2006) argued that the research on employees is minimal resulting in the stigma attached to the term employee, which conjures images of doubtful, demeaning, weak, passive, and conforming work. Limited research exists on followership because of a misconception that leadership is more substantial than followership (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Many people view employees to be systematically less appreciative, and the term *employees* can conjure unfavorable images (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Considering the stereotypical perception of employees, several individuals avoid carrying the label. The belief that good followership is clearly performing instructions did not make an employee a leader (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

When corporate leaders focus on the betterment of the organization, little discussion takes place regarding followership and individuals focus more on developing leadership skills (Bjugstad et al., 2006). A large number of discussions take place regarding the success of leaders and factors that make effective leaders; however, individuals ignore the fact that leaders need employees to achieve established goals (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Researchers did not study followership as part of the leadership research until the early 1990s (Malakyan, 2013). Based on arguments presented by Bjugstad et al. (2006), leader effectiveness is dependent upon the willingness and consent of employees and without employees, there can be no leaders.

Within organizations, worker interdependence and job intricacy are necessary for employees to interact in advanced communication, information exchange, and cooperation (Richardson & Taylor, 2012). There are a number of avenues extended to employees regarding active roles in making organizational decisions. These employees must channel their perceptions and opinions to leaders and be intentional in their exchange of knowledge and information (Richardson & Taylor, 2012). Petitioning employees and using their input may lead to better leadership decisions based on added concrete information. Decision enhancement may increase employees' commitment, and boost employees' performance. Providing feedback can enable employees to convey ideas, opinions, make work interesting and challenging, and assist in accomplishing higher order needs for esteem, agency, and association (Richardson & Taylor, 2012). Performance feedback links to performance effectiveness on motivation (Seevers, Rowe, & Skinner, 2014). Employee involvement in organizational decision making could benefit both leaders and employees regarding achieving organizational goals.

Leadership

Followers need leaders and leaders need followers (Brumm & Drury, 2013). Following is a primary role for most individuals in organizations considering employees and leaders spend more time functioning in their primary role as a follower (Brumm &

Drury, 2013). Followers exercise a key role in constructing and endorsing the leader (Emery, Calvard, & Pierce, 2013). Organizational culture can determine the type of leadership, communication, and group dynamics within an organization. Attempts to understand the phenomenon of leadership focused on individuals in leadership positions overlooks the leader-employee relationship (Ruiz et al., 2011).

Bjugstad et al. (2006) argued that organizational literature comprises the study of leadership attributes supporting the perception that good or bad leadership greatly explains organizational results. Many leaders acknowledge that developing employee skills and ability is inherent for constructing high-performance organizations. According to Defee et al. (2009), no one can define leadership without identifying a group of willing employees and leadership is a critical factor in the success or failure of an organization. Watson (2012) reported that being a leader is to have followers.

Employees, not the leader, define leadership; therefore, employees are not only vital to the leadership process, they are imperative to the leadership process (Varela, 2013). Conversely, Parris and Peachey (2013) argued that leadership research is one of the most comprehensively social influences in behavioral sciences. The accomplishments of all economic, political, and organizational systems depend on the effective guidance of leaders. Leadership is a skill that influences employees in an organization to perform eagerly toward goals for the common good (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Leadership phenomena and their meanings gain the attention of the business world because they attempt to explain the relevant role of human groups in organizations (Ruiz et al., 2011).

The goal is to comprehend the leadership phenomenon that focuses on individuals in leadership positions, including moral dimensions. The qualities that employees appreciate in leaders include valuing and developing individuals, practicing genuineness in leadership, and forming a community.

Charismatic Leadership and Employees

Charismatic leadership links to a variety of positive outcomes, including follower job satisfaction and productivity (Hayibor, Agle, Sears, Sonnenfeld, & Ward, 2011). Weber and Moore (2013) suggested that charismatic leaders possess the quality of personal magnetism that compels followers to follow. Moreover, charismatic leaders' behaviors exhibit an impression that they are extraordinary, and their mission is exceptional (Zehir, Müceldili, Altindag, Sehitoglu, & Zehir, 2014). Charismatic leaders produce effects by engaging heavily employees' self-concepts in the interest of the mission coherently by the leader. Charismatic leadership values can enhance and revolutionize an entire organization. Hayibor, Agle, Sears, Sonnenfeld, and Ward (2011) suggested that there is a connection between charismatic leadership and a large variety of positive outcomes ranging from leader effectiveness to employee job satisfaction and performance. Researchers of charismatic leadership recommended that employees' self-concepts might also be congruent in identifying their level of motivation to follow certain leaders (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Charismatic leaders could possess skills to motivate and inspire employees through their displays of confidence and positive emotions.

Employee response to charismatic leadership. Employees demonstrate commitment and support to their leader and internalize the charismatic leaders' core values (Hayibor et al., 2011). Employees may have a voice and verbalize their opinions in their organization as leaders exercise influence over the beliefs, values, behavior, and performance of these individuals through their behavior (Kwak, 2012). Employees view charismatic leaders as individuals who possess a sense of charisma, and they attribute leaders’ charismatic mannerisms to leaders charisma (Kwak, 2012). Behaviors that employees ascribe to leaders are communicating leaders’ desires to enhance the status quo, remove environmental pressure for change, offer appealing and inspiring vision, and articulate collective identity and interests (Kwak, 2012). Employees, who judge leaders as charismatic because of leaders’ personal charismatic behaviors, may learn ethically and demonstrate leader mannerisms. Perceptions of charismatic leadership may relate to employee job satisfaction (Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2013). Mannerisms include communicating interests that may change the existing work situations, disapprove the status quo, and offer effective feedback for change (Kwak, 2012). Leaders with charisma could foster inspirational motivation and express confidence that employees can achieve collective objectives.

Transformational Leadership and Employees

When interaction takes place between employees and leaders in the workplace, a transformation may change self, others, groups, and organizations. Transformational leadership is a prominent theory of organizational behavior (Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012). Individuals view transformational leadership as a useful approach for comprehending employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance, whereas the leadership style is conceptualized as leaders influencing employees by elevating employee goals (Liang and Chi, 2013). Transformational leaders empower employees to increase organizational values, goals, and perspectives according to the goals and objectives of the organizational (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015).

Transformational leadership through demonstration encompasses four main dimensions of leader skills: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized considerations (Vasilaki, 2011). Idealized influence occurs when individuals focus on leaders being a role model to their employees. Inspirational motivation encompasses demonstrating self-determination and commitment to ensuring objectives and presenting a confident and achievable view of the future. Intellectual stimulation results from individuals challenging others to think critically, and individual consideration concentrates on the leader-member exchange, a procedure in which a leader consults with employees individually (Vasilaki, 2011). Leaders can encourage employee commitment by sharing information and providing employees the opportunity to contribute to decisions made at the workplace level (Schreurs, Guenter, Schumacher, Van Emmerik, & Notelaers, 2013).

Transformational leaders inspire the team with a vision and provide directions by motivating and encouraging employees to achieve organizational goals (Kamisan & King, 2013). Transformational leaders are change agents who elicit and transform employees' beliefs, attitudes, and motivations (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Bernardo, 2013).

Cavazotte, Moreno, and Bernardo (2013) reported that leadership theorists, through literature reviews and studies, described the positive links between transformational leadership with performance outcomes. Transformational leaders may influence employees by forming and verbalizing a unified vision and motivating employees to seek beyond self-interest for the good of the team and the organization. Engaging employees in the communication of a vision can be imperative (Kohles, Bligh, & Carsten, 2013). Accordingly, McCleskey (2014) recommended that transformational leaders raise followers' level of consciousness regarding the importance and value of desirable outcomes and the methods of achieving those outcomes.

Researchers associate transformational leadership with a large number of key follower and organizational outcomes (Tipu, Ryan, & Fantazy, 2012). According to theories of transformational and charismatic leadership, leaders motivate employees to achieve high expectations by engaging in inspirational behaviors, such as expressing a compelling vision, stressing collective identities, demonstrating confidence and optimism, and applying core values and ideals (Grant, 2012). Transformational leadership dominates the leadership literature and has various meanings as related to employees. Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) noted that transformational leaders articulate an appealing future vision, introduce work with meaning, and motivate employees. Leaders, who pay attention to employees' individual needs, demonstrate leadership skills. Leaders display skills by focusing on individuals' consideration for accomplishment and growth by educating, empowering, equipping, and opening doors for new opportunities (Pieterse, van Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2010). Transformational leadership can be different from other leadership theories in a way that the leadership style empowers or enables followers, which could result in both the leader and employee transcending to a higher level of motivation.

Employee response to transformational leadership. Under transformational leadership, employees establish value-congruent goals as transformational leaders engage in inspirational behaviors (Grant, 2012). Behavior entails expressing a vision, demonstrating confidence and optimism, and discussing core values and ideals (Grant, 2012). Leaders display skills by focusing on individuals' consideration for accomplishment and job performance are higher considering the positive transformational leadership connection with employees (Grant, 2012). Employees tend to identify strongly with their leader (Olcer, Florescu, & Nastase, 2014). Employees led by transformational leaders experience work to be meaningful as leaders tend to engage with these individuals.

Literature entails evidence that transformational leaders do not always empower employees (Grant, 2012). Employees do not always perform at higher levels when under the supervision of transformational leaders. When this style of leader expresses their vision, they encounter obstacles in making these visions a concrete reality. Individuals led by transformational leaders view work duties as a mirror of deep underlying values (Grant, 2012). Originally, the expectation of transformational leadership was to be distinct from and more effective than reward or transactional leadership. Leadership theorists consistently suggested that effective leaders augment their use of transformational behaviors with effective transactional strategies (Grant, 2012). Additionally, transformational leaders are likely to promote employees dependency, which could have a negative influence on employees' creativity (Eisenbei & Boerner, 2013). Leaders who demonstrate transformational style of leadership may have direct influence on the commitment level of their employees.

Transactional Leadership and Employees

Transactional leadership style is common in large organizations, and leaders focus on the exchange relation between themselves and their followers (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). McCleskey (2014) argued that the relationships are temporary exchanges of gratification and create resentments between the leader and follower. Transactional leadership is a traded relationship, whereas leaders define expectations and address their immediate self-interests and employees' self-interests (Pieterse et al., 2010). Transactional leaders identify the actions employees should execute to achieve outcomes and clarify role and task requirements so employees are motivated in exerting necessary efforts to accomplish leader expectations (Clark, 2013). As a result of the exchange relations between leaders and employees, leaders accomplish performance objectives, complete required tasks, and motivate employees through contractual agreement (McCleskey, 2014). The leadership style focuses more on in-role performance and less on the incentive of new activities. This focus creates negative affiliations to innovation behavior (Pieterse et al., 2010).

Employee response to transactional leadership. Transactional leaders obtain results from followers that are beyond expectation (Garg & Ramjee, 2013). Under transactional leadership, employees receive rewards for achieving goals and leaders identify the rewards they will give to employees if employees fulfill the requirements (Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013). Ertureten, Cemalcilar, and Aycan (2013) noted that transactional leaders actively monitor employees performance and take the necessary corrective actions if employees do not demonstrate satisfactory performance. Perceptions of transactional leadership include leaders controlling and demotivating followers although leaders communicate expectations of employees and monitor to ensure employees meet the expectations (Pieterse et al., 2010). Employees supervised by a transactional leader may experience a sense of separation from other employees regarding organizational achievements, considering their leader may make individual task performance salient.

Authentic Leadership Influence on Employee Work Performance

Within organizations, demanding individuals to be creative can be challenging regarding solving complex problems, enhancing quality, and offering superior customer service. According to Leroy et al. (2012), authentic leadership and leader behavioral integrity are affiliates to employee work performance, fully mediated through employee intuitive organizational commitment and dedication. The aforementioned relationships remain stable when controlling for ethical organizational culture. The process of authentic leadership enables leaders to influence self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors of both leaders and followers (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015). Authentic leadership theorists conceptualize leaders' authenticity as an essentialist entity and assume that individuals can discover and cultivate their innate authentic potential alone in a process that joins self-awareness and self-narration (Berkovich, 2014).

Participative leadership is shared influence and collaborative decision making between leaders and followers (Lam, Xu, & Chan, 2015). Huang, Iun, Liu, and Gong (2010) explained two theoretical models widely used to describe the effect of the participative leadership decisions of leaders on employees' work performance. This motivational model indicated increased opportunities to engage in decision making, provide employees with greater compatible rewards from work and greater levels of psychological empowerment, which may result in enhanced work performance (Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010). Understanding the right time to adopt the motivational or exchange-based model or both to describe the effectiveness of participative leadership decision making is imperative as an employees' job level may affect perceptions of participative leadership decisions. Understanding mechanisms regarding how participative leadership influence employees' performance may help practitioners. Practitioners could create effective training and development programs in an effort to improve participative leadership, rather than forming ineffective programs.

When participative leadership can improve the work performance of lower-level employees, leaders may assume that empowerment works, which may cause misinterpretations of the needs of employees (Huang et al., 2010). With respect to employees in nonmanagerial positions, participative leadership may affect work performance by generating high levels of trust in their immediate leader versus encouraging psychological empowerment (Huang et al., 2010). Enlarging the degree that employees participate in decision making may increase performance through enhanced motivation, according to the motivational model (Huang et al., 2010). Participative leaders are required to share or give up a certain amount of control over decision making (Lam et al., 2015).

Leadership Theories and Followership

Leadership theorists and practice are encountering unprecedented challenges posed by increasing social inequity, the worldwide spread of terrorism, and the effects of climate change (Lawrence & Pirson, 2015). An expansive and growing variety of theories exists to analyze the approach and practice of leadership as related to employees and followership. This section entails a review of leadership theories as they relate to employee recognition. Baker et al. (2011) argued that leadership theories normally focus on leaders and their effects on employees and organizational results.

In situational leadership theory, McCleskey (2014) suggested that the theory includes information pertaining to leadership styles and the need to relate leaders’ style to followers’ level of maturity. Additionally, McCleskey reported that situational leadership theory evolved from a task-oriented versus people-oriented leadership continuum. According to the theory, leaders receive instructions to adopt one of the four leadership styles based on the caliber of the relationship and task-oriented behavior the situation demands (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Situational leadership theorists categorize the four leadership styles as: (a) telling, (b) selling, (c) participating, and (d) delegating (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Situational leadership theory evolved from a task-oriented versus people-oriented leadership. In the situational leadership model, Hershey and Blanchard assumed that effective and successful leaders adopt appropriate styles or behaviors according to the situation (as cited in Korzinski, 2013).

Telling leadership style is when employees lack leadership components, such as training, confidence, or desire to complete a task (Bjugstad et al., 2006). In telling situations, leaders need to instruct employees regarding the right path to take by providing detailed instructions and supervising the employee’s performance (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Leaders demonstrate high directive behavior and low supportive behavior in these situations (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Selling is the style leaders use when employees are confident and willing; however, their ability to complete tasks is low. Leaders guide employees behavior by detailing decisions and offering employees the opportunity to ask questions. Leaders offer both high directive and high supportive behaviors (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Bjugstad et al. (2006) argued that passive employees are a better fit for leaders who possess a selling leadership style as employees can improve their production and receive encouragement from leaders who spend time listening and coaching employees.

Leaders use the participating style to enhance motivation of individuals who have capabilities to accomplish the goals the leader sets; however, lack personal confidence

(Bjugstad et al., 2006). The objective of the participating leadership style is to inspire employees to engage and take an active role, so they feel more connected to the organization. Leaders can enhance employees' motivation by praising the employee and making the employee feel good about themselves and their work (Bjugstad et al., 2006). A leader, who shares ideas and facilitate the decision making process, is a better fit for alienated employees (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Leaders that possess participating leadership skills offer little direction behavior and increased support (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Delegating leadership style is active when employees are able, courageous, and motivated. Leaders turn over duties to employees regarding what to do and how to carry out the task (Bjugstad et al., 2006) resulting in leaders extending little direction and low support (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014).

Explaining an event by indicating a cause is often normal behavior within organizations. Hernes and Braenden (2012) stated that attribution theory is an individual's explanation of behaviors and events and causality, stability, and controllability, which are the three main variables in attribution theory. Individuals explain behaviors, events, or the situation depending on if behaviors are permanent or vary over time, and if individuals familiar with the situation can influence the outcome of the behaviors (Hernes & Braenden, 2012). Regarding relationships in organizations, attribution theorists explain how leaders support their employees and develop an attribution theory-based model of peer responses to employees' low performance (Hernes & Braenden, 2012). Leaders who understand employee behavior know what type of environment to provide to their employees and what motivates employees (Olcer et al., 2014). Adopting the attribution theory may be beneficial for leaders and employees in organizations, whereas an examination may take place regarding the level of support extended to employees by leaders. Organizations have their own cultures, which could affect employee performance (Shahzad, Iqbal, & Gulzar, 2013).

Transformational leadership theorists suggest variations in leadership styles are a result of cultural influence (Pauliene, 2012). Developing a positive organizational culture is dependent on the perception of enhancing satisfaction, motivation, and productivity in the workplace (Ramlall, Al-Kahtani, & Damanhouri, 2014). Researchers link organizational culture with various organizational behaviors (Shahzad et al., 2013), and organizational culture relates to outcomes at both the organization and employee levels (Kim, 2014). Both transformational and transactional leadership theories will have a worldwide application as both models have the ability to adapt to various cultural settings (Pauliene, 2012). Knowing what leadership skills and knowledge leaders value are fundamental as the skills and knowledge offer intuition into forming competencies (Pauliene, 2012).

Path goal theory is almost 40 years old and encompasses more than 120 scholarly articles and numerous in-depth reviews exploring the theory’s scientific merits (Malik, 2012). Path goal theorists suggest that directive leader behavior is more compelling for employees with high needs for achievement than employees with fewer needs for achievement (Malik, 2012). Directive leaders assist employees with resolving task and role ambiguity and provide external monitoring and performance feedback (Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims, 2013). The behavior of a directive leader is to clarify the path guiding employees (Malik, 2012). In addition, middle managers are key players in accomplishing organizational objectives by motivating employees, removing barriers, clarifying paths to a goal and rewarding employees.

Expectancy theory relates to training, motivation, turnover, productivity, self-established goals, and goal commitment (Renko, Kroeck, & Bullough, 2012). Expectancy theorists suggest that motivation depends on an individual’s belief that efforts lead to performance and performance converts to rewards (Malik, 2012). Expectancy theorists also recommend that personal rewards employees receive should increase upon accomplishing goals. The increase may be in addition to making the path to the goals easier to follow by offering clarification and minimizing obstacles rather than unclear instructions (Malik, 2012). Employees may increase their level or productivity if they believe their efforts will result in exemplary performance and their leader will recognize their performance by offering a reward.

The Impact of Respect on Recognition

The distinction between effective and ineffective leadership toward employees can be a major concern for organizations. Leaders who demonstrate respectful behaviors motivate employees and lead groups and organizations effectively (Yukl, 2012). Employees who receive respectful treatment from leaders may demonstrate a high degree of affection for individuals within the organization. Employees who receive positive feedback from leaders regarding their work performance experience an emotion of gratification and job satisfaction (Scheers & Botha, 2014).

Mentorship in the leader-employee relationship may be an imperative component regarding the effectiveness and quality of the relationship. Grotrian-Ryan (2015) defined mentoring as a protected relationship in which gaining knowledge and experimentation can occur and skills can develop. Zhuang, Wu, and Wen (2013) defined a mentor as one who possesses profound knowledge and educates and guide the inexperienced. This type of communication may influence organizational results depending on how employees respond. Sampson and James (2012) described mentoring as more than an organizational imperative, rather mentoring is a social relationship pursued by leaders and employees expecting returns to their careers and to their human and social capital.

Prior to 2013, researchers overlooked the impact of respect on recognition as related to the negative effects of employee recognition (Freys, Anseel, & Willie, 2013). Researchers conducted a plethora of empirical studies on the effects of workplace aggression and centered their attention on intra-organization members, such as leaders and employees (Li & Zhou, 2013). Workplace aggression researchers determined that outcomes of workplace aggression are negative and consist of lowered job satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment, and high turnover intentions (Chu-Hsiang & Lyons, 2012). Shaw, Kotowski, Boster, and Levine (2012) defined verbal aggression as well-known communication traits that predispose an individual to defend a position while attacking others' positions. In some organizational cultures, verbal aggression is an effective way of achieving goals and organizations may support aggressive behavior if the behavior is functional for motivating employees (Pilch & Turska, 2015).

Cross Cultural Consideration in Recognition

Numerous studies exist regarding leadership, leadership styles, and the influence leaders have on organizations (Carleton, 2011). Compared to leadership, little literature is available on the topic of followership, and the influence employees have on organizational sustainability. Lamm, Tosti-Kharas, and King (2015) argued that academic researchers focus on sustainability initiatives by organizations rather than individuals. A fundamental resource in organizations is the knowledge workers have of effective organizational sustainability (Carleton, 2011). Knowledgeable workers should be able to process, synthesize, and generate knowledge, which will enable employees to solve problems and innovate in organizations.

Employees may reciprocate by engaging in behaviors that are advantageous for the leader and the organization if their leader is supportive, respectful, and caring (Kim & Kim, 2013). The attitudes, behavior, and influence of leaders and employees differ across organizational and employee cultures. The level of influence on employee performance and job satisfaction causes considerable attention to organizational culture (Momeni, Marjani, & Saadat, 2012). To be effective in leading a culturally diverse workforce, leaders need to know and understand how individually held cultural values influence reactions to the leadership function. In addition, leaders need to comprehend and understand how various leadership behaviors interact with employees' cultural value orientations to affect employee effective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

Multicultural Management and Employee Recognition

When multicultural leaders recognize employees as a homogeneous group or as a group that contributes to a narrow set of organizational outcomes, leaders risk overlooking how employees can contribute to organizational sustainability (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Sustainability is a pivotal goal for organizations and refers to longevity, continuity, and capability to be maintained (Florea, Cheung, & Herndon, 2013). When organizational leaders view multicultural employees as a homogeneous group or a group that contributes to a narrow set of outcomes, leaders risk overlooking the variety of resources and challenges employees represent (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Leaders who fail to understand variations in multicultural employees' potential contributions to their organization, support ineffective organizational policies (Fitzsimmons, 2013).

Understanding the meaning of followership, leadership, what motivates employees, and rewards employees are grateful to receive for exemplary acts may be advantageous for leaders. Comprehending these meanings may assist leaders in identifying skills leaders use to implement recognition procedures that increase employee productivity. This section contained information on the aforementioned topics in detail. Additionally, understanding various leadership styles and employee responses to the leadership styles could assist in determining the type of leaders who recognize employees for satisfactory job performance.

Transition and Summary

The preceding section contained the foundation and background information for the current study, as well as a review of the problem and purpose statements. Explanations of the nature of the study along with research questions are components of Section 1. I based the conceptual framework for this study on LMX theory and offered a review of the literature regarding the study topic. Section 1 included a definition of terms; assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study; and the significance of the study, which entails the contributions to business practice and social change.

Section 2 begins with a review of the purpose of the study, role of the researcher, and participants in the data collection process. I provided a description of the study participant's selection process and a synopsis of the ethical protection of research participants. Additionally, Section 2 contains a description of the research method and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 includes an overview of the study, presentation of findings, implication of change, and recommendation for action.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains a description of the phenomenological research project, an explanation of the purpose of the study, an illustration of the role of the researcher, and identification of study participants. In Section 2, I discuss the method and design, identification of the population and sampling, and procedure for data collection. Further, Section 2 includes the data organization and analysis process and specifications of the methods to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. Twenty law enforcement employees, comprising 10 leaders and 10 employees within a patrol division at a police department in southwestern North Carolina, participated in in-depth, semistructured telephone interviews. The results of this study may lead to the enhancement of leadership training and organizational processes related to rewards and praise, which would enable law enforcement leaders to implement developmental programs that improve officer-citizen relationships. The leadership training could enhance employee skills regarding community policing, resulting in a positive social change that inspires citizens to build positive relationships with police officers, thereby creating safer communities.

Role of the Researcher

The primary role of a researcher in a qualitative phenomenological study is to collect information regarding experiences of the target study participants and to design the collective core meaning of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers create questions, communicate with participants, collect data, and analyze the results (Yin, 2013). Interview questions for this study pertained to participants' lived experiences as related to leaders acknowledging employees for their organizational contributions. My role in this qualitative phenomenological study was to collect data without bias. Miner-Romanoff (2012) suggested that prior experience with a research topic may enable the researcher to reflect on prior experience and enhance meaning of participants' responses. As a leader and employee in the workforce, I supervise a team of employees and receive directives from my superior; therefore, I was familiar with the study topic from the perspective of a leader and an employee. According to the Belmont Report (1979), the selection of study participants requires that researchers use fairness and should not extend potentially beneficial research to individuals they favor. A professional affiliation with study participants, a personal rapport with study participants, or a personal relationship with the target organization did not exist. I treated participants in an ethical manner and protected the confidentiality of each individual.

Researchers should be able to identify biases, values, and background that can form their opinion of data collection during the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Biases might result from personal experiences, perspectives, and values (Miner-

Romanoff, 2012). Biases can influence individuals regardless of their experience, and the influence is often subconscious (Mooreland, 2013). Once researchers identify prejudices, they should not allow their biases and values to influence their perception of data collection to ensure the validity of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As the researcher, I was conscious of my potential bias and attempted to mitigate my personal interests by remaining open to data collected from participants during the interview process.

For this study, I composed an interview protocol to increase consistency in the data collection process. The use of an interview protocol (see Appendix D) enables researchers to uncover thorough information about the participant and the phenomenon (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Rich (2012) indicated that using an interview protocol ensures investigative areas are covered. Stewart, Polak, Young, and Schultz (2012) noted that an interview protocol enables researchers to create a consistent data collection technique for each interview.

Participants

The primary approach through which a researcher can obtain information regarding an organization is through the experience of individuals who make up the organization or carry out the process (Seidman, 2013). To ensure research participants' familiarity with their organization, level of experience with leaders, and how leaders recognized employees within the organization, I required participants to have at least 1 year of employment at the organization at the time of data collection. Wolfe and Kim

(2013) contended that job satisfaction relates positively to job tenure, and long-time employees display job satisfaction when they can demonstrate their expertise. Concurrently, Oberfield (2014) agreed that tenure in an organization relates to employee motivation. Individuals positively associate leader tenure with employee relationships (Luo, Kanuri, & Andrews, 2014). The positive effects from work performance boosts police officers' self-confidence and enhances their willingness of engaging in performance to help their organization, thereby improving organizational effectiveness (Hsieh, Chen, Lee, & Kao, 2012). Leaders reward law enforcement personnel for the competences officers use in the process of work and officers effort (Basinska & Wiciak, 2013).

Upon receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval number 03-26-15-0224850, to collect data from a group of individuals who experience the same phenomena as employees and leaders, I selected study participants via purposeful sampling. To ensure researchers conduct studies in an ethical manner, working with IRBs during the development and implementation stages is mandatory (Resnik, Miller, Kwok, Engel, & Sandler, 2015). While IRB review can add delays without increasing the protection for research participants (Wechsler, 2015), the use of IRBs defines governance as regulation considering the focus is on balancing the protection of study participants from harm while trying to foster scientific innovation (Oetzel et al., 2015). Through purposeful sampling, researchers can deliberately select participants with simplified information that could be critical to the study topic (Olsen, Orr, Bell, & Stuart, 2013). After contacting the local police department, detailing my study's research question, and soliciting approval to interview their employees, I obtained permission from the police department's authorizing representative to interview managerial and nonmanagerial personnel on employee recognition. Along with the approved letter of cooperation (see Appendix C), the organization provided a list of 100 employees' names and email addresses as potential participants.

To gain access, ensure privacy, and ensure the ethical protection of research participants, individuals received an electronic invitation for participant recruitment that included the consent and confidentiality form, and a sample of the interview questions. The decision to send correspondence detailing the research topic and requesting consent to participate in the study aligned with the procedures used by Frooman, Mendelson, and Murphy (2012). An electronic explanation of a study provides details necessary to assist in preparing for the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I extended the invitation to participate in the study to 50 of the 100 individuals from the list the target organization provided. Selecting participants that meet the study's criteria is effective for qualitative researchers rather than randomizing samples (Starke, 2013). When conducting research, understanding that participants are critical elements of the research process whose collective protection should be a top priority is pivotal (Largent, Grady, Miller, & Wertheimer, 2012). From the initial pool of invitations, only 12 participants responded. The remaining 50 individuals received the electronic invitation to participate, and eight participants responded expressing an interest to engage in the study. One participant withdrew from the study resulting in sending potential participants, who previously received the invitation, the third email as a follow-up. From the follow-up email, one individual expressed interest, which totaled 20 participants.

The electronic invitation included a participant letter, a confidentiality and consent to participate form, and a sample of the interview questions. In addition, the information included: (a) purpose of the study, (b) how the study may influence social change, (c) the expectations of study participants, and (d) the participant's right to withdraw from the study without penalty. The consent to participate correspondence also included an explanation regarding the method for collecting information from study participants, the amount of time necessary for semistructured, in-depth interviews, a sample copy of the interview questions, and the interview method. I allowed 45 minutes for each interview and did not schedule any interviews back-to-back to ensure sufficient time in the event interviews extended beyond the allotted time. Cachia and Millward (2011) conducted semistructured telephone interviews that lasted between 15 and 60 minutes. Telephone interviews are a viable option to face-to-face interviews (Anyan, 2013). Although Cachia and Millward noted that study participants perceive telephone interviews as an effective method to maintain their privacy, Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013) stated that there is an increased need for participant clarification during telephone interviews.

Developing a relationship with study participants was necessary to building trust to ensure participants understood the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and respect their viewpoint regarding the subject. Researchers are to establish rapport quickly and build a relationship during the interview, allowing study participants to feel comfortable as they share their experience (Bartkowiak, 2012). Yin (2011) recommended that the researcher and participant engage in conversation about the study topic, which enables the researcher to establish rapport and motivate the participant. Building rapport with participants via telephone interviews may occur by structuring the conversation to meet the needs of each participant in which the researcher could empower the participant (Trier-Bieniek, 2012). Study participants received respect and dignity during the interview process. Building rapport began with providing an introduction, purpose of the study, and the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. Contacting study participants and providing pertinent study information was an effort to build rapport before the interview process. When linking interviews with previous communication, such as email, study participants are likely to forego shyness and offer extremely perceptive views regarding the phenomenon (Trier-Bieniek, 2012).

Research Method and Design

Sinkovics and Alfodi (2012) stated that the primary objective of qualitative research is to identify and analyze the problem, while offering a holistic account of the subject matter. The qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design allowed me to gather data regarding skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. The design selection is dependent on the situation and objectives of the research instead of deriving from philosophy or methodology.

According to Wahyuni (2012), choosing the correct method for research begins with an overview of research archetypes as fundamental beliefs that influence the ways to conduct social research. The use of a qualitative methodology and phenomenological design provided exploration of the phenomenon employees experience in the police department. Workplace experiences in the police department included: (a) leadership types demonstrated by leaders who recognize employees for positive contributions, (b) skills those leaders exhibited, and (c) the type of leader-employee relationship that existed when an employee received recognition.

Method

To explore the subject of skills leaders implemented to recognize employees, I used a qualitative method. Lakshman (2012) expressed the need for qualitative designs in the exploration of leadership processes, an area of research dominated by quantitative methods of inquiry. With the expansion of qualitative study activity, researchers tend to analyze topics in diverse contexts and apply a wide range of methods leading to divergent findings on the identical topic (Suri, 2011). Lugosi, Janta,, and Watson (2012) suggested that qualitative research includes diverse strategies of inquiry and data analysis according to text, interviews, and observation. The qualitative methodology includes a set of data collection and analysis techniques to create a description of the phenomenon (Verner & Abdullah, 2012).

Branthwaite and Patterson (2011) noted there are three distinguishing values of qualitative research that make the qualitative methodology a unique and invaluable tool.

These values include conversation as a direct dialogue with individuals that takes place face-to-face, by telephone, or by a form of computer video such as Skype; active listening for the underlying dialogue; and rapport (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011).
Bailey (2014) suggested that qualitative research is recognizable via the use of methods that include in-depth interviews and group-moderation techniques. Leko (2014) recommended that qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews, which allow the researcher to uncover opportunities for further exploration. Semistructured interviews are beneficial when the researcher has one opportunity to interview study participants (Verner & Abdullah, 2012). Qualitative interviews are more in-depth and focused than ordinary conversations, as they are directed by an interviewer who asks questions and notes participant responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Advantages existed for conducting qualitative research versus quantitative or mixed methods research. By conducting a qualitative study rather than a quantitative method or mixed methods, I understood the meaning individuals attributed to a social problem by collecting data from participants via in-depth interviews and analyzed individuals experience regarding employee recognition. Qualitative researchers summarize comprehensively specific events, groups, and individuals' experiences (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Qualitative researchers offer expertise and knowledge to cover the procedures they use and the interpretation they determine (Bailey, 2014). Qualitative approaches may vary from researchers describing commonalities in lived experiences to identifying culturally available narratives of a particular experience (Burr, King, & Butt, 2014).

A quantitative research process involves numbers, statistical data formation, reasoning, formulating a hypothesis, and drawing conclusions (Nelson & Evans, 2014). The purpose for quantitative research is to examine a relationship between observed behavior and data via statistical analysis (Doherty, 2011). Quantitative researchers analyze objective aspects of social research and rely on empirical methods rather than interactive methods (Thyer, 2012). Using the quantitative method was not reasonable for this study, considering I did not examine behavior with numerical analysis, create statistical data formation, or form a hypothesis.

Mixed methods research enables researchers to advance theory (Stentz, Plano Clark, & Matkin, 2012). Mixed methods researchers focus on the exploration of problems and solutions rather than understanding the cause of problems (Sparkes, 2014). Using the mixed methods approach enables researchers to combine deductive and inductive methods when one method is not sufficient (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Although mixed methods research was a viable option, qualitative research was suitable, considering the study did not include the use of both deductive and inductive methods, and using mixed methods enables the researcher to focus on the exploration rather than the cause of problems.

Research Design

For this study, I employed the phenomenological research design. Moustakas (1994) suggested that phenomenological research entails evidence derived from first person reports of life experiences. The researcher determines the appropriateness of the research problem and explores the understanding of several individuals' shared experiences (Moustakas, 1994); whereas, Ivey (2013) asserted that qualitative phenomenological approach is suitable for research exploring a phenomenon difficult to observe or understand. Bevan (2014) noted that researchers who use a phenomenological design should interview at least 20 participants, which is time-consuming from the inception of the study to the data analysis process. According to Dworkin (2012), researchers who conduct in-depth interviews may include as few as five study participants. A phenomenological researcher determines the meanings individuals attribute to real world lived experiences (Pereira, 2012).

A phenomenological research design allows the researcher to explore lived experiences of study participants, which entails interviewing, identifying themes, and coding to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon (Deal & Grassley, 2012). I asked study participants open-ended questions regarding their experiences as an employee or as a leader regarding any recognition extended for exemplary acts to employees for their contributions to the organizations. Semistructured interviews are effective when the researcher asks research questions that offer study participants an understanding of the research perception and the connection that exists between the concepts (Eide & Showalter, 2012). By using semistructured interviews, participants can elaborate on their experiences thoroughly and lessen the possibility for misinterpretation (Boudville, Anjou, & Taylor, 2013). During the interview process, using terminology such as how, why, explain, and detail allowed participants to provide elaboration regarding their experience. Study participant had an opportunity to elaborate on their responses to open-ended questions in support of the overarching research question.

In comparison to other research designs, the phenomenological research design was appropriate for this study to determine skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. Narrative research entails the consolidation between space and time that meaning occurs (Garud & Giulianti, 2013). In narrative design research, study participants define experience via autobiographies of roles within the target environment of study (Richards, 2012). The narrative design was not adequate for this study because participants' autobiographies did not explain the observed phenomenon within the target organization. Case study research is the profound study of instances of a phenomenon in a neutral context and from the viewpoint of the study participants (Vohra, 2014). Case study researchers closely observe study participants and their interactions on a day-to-day practice (Moll, 2012). Considering no close interaction with study participants was possible due to the nature of the participants' duties, conducting a case study was not suitable for this study. According to Lambert, Glacken, and McCarron (2013), ethnographic inquiry methods are feasible to determine cultural characteristics, such as race, class, and gender for the group under study. Ethnographic inquiry methods enable researchers to observe an overview of a phenomenon under study over a period of time (Lambert, Glacken, & McCarron, 2013). Extended observation of study participants' phenomenon did not occur over time; therefore, conducing ethnographic research was not appropriate for this study. While each of these other designs has value in qualitative research, the phenomenological design was a better fit for this study and allowed me to gather data in support of answering the research question.

During the interview process, the identification of data saturation occurred after interviewing Participant CE-5. I confirmed data saturation by continuing the interview process through Participant L-10. Dworkin (2012) determined the saturation point occurs when no new information comes from the data. Data saturation is the point at which no new information emerges during the data collection process (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Suri (2011) noted the use of structured interview questions creates a higher probability for data saturation. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) suggested that data saturation is a method that is beneficial to all qualitative researchers who conduct interviews as the primary collection instrument.

Population and Sampling

Researchers should focus on the subjectively relevant components of their population (Shalini & Arora, 2012). For this study, the population consisted of employees from the target police department who met the eligibility criteria to participate in the data collection process. Twenty full-time law enforcement employees from a single police department located in the southwestern region of North Carolina interviewed on the subject of employee recognition. The sample consisted of 10 leaders (including seven sworn officers and three nonuniformed civilian leaders) and 10 employees (three sworn officers and seven nonuniformed civilian employees). In addition to selecting a research topic and appropriate design, no other research task is more fundamental to creating valid research than obtaining a sufficient sample (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Knowledgeable decision making regarding sampling enhances the quality of research synthesis (Suri, 2011).

Community officials and other government entities recognized the target police department for the department’s countless accomplishments to include solving crimes, community policing, and community programs. The organization’s achievements and the level of employee community engagement created an attraction for me to seek understanding regarding how leaders recognized and rewarded employees for their contribution to the success of the police department. The exemplary recognition led me to conclude that the target organization employed individuals who could elaborate on skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity.

For this study, I employed a purposeful sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling adds to the credibility in research and enables researchers to identify and select study participants experiencing the phenomenon under study (Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling is the best method for phenomenological research (Kornhaber, Wilson, Abu-Oamar, McLean, & Vandervord, 2015). Yin (2013) suggested purposeful sampling is the preferred sampling method to permit the qualitative researcher to select study participants by allowing increased comprehension and insight of the phenomena. By using purposeful sampling, researchers can access key participants in the target field who may provide information to build rich cases (Suri, 2011). Concurrent with Suri (2011), Rowley (2012) noted when qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling, the researchers can select participants who offer in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon. Olsen, Orr, Bell, and Stuart (2013) suggested that purposeful sampling enables the careful selection of participants with simplified information that could be suitable to the research. The use of purposeful sampling provides credibility to the understanding of the phenomena and assures that the collected data provides different aspects without judgment (Petty et al., 2012). Using purposeful sampling enabled me to select research participants via three criteria: (a) potential participants worked a minimum of 1 year with the organization, (b) employees reported to at least one leader, and (c) leaders supervised a minimum of one employee. Participants who met the aforementioned criteria qualified to participate in the study.

Interviewing various types of employees, both followers and leaders, may increase perspectives regarding the shared phenomenon (Dworkin, 2012). Research conducted via in-depth interviews may include 5 to 50 study participants (Dworkin, 2012). Tirgari (2012) suggested that a sample size between 10 and 30 participants is feasible for data collection for phenomenological research. Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, and Stine (2014) found that14 participants offered meaningful information to collect relevant data. Samples for qualitative research are considerably smaller than samples used in quantitative studies (Mason, 2010). Conversely, O'Reilly and Parker (2013) recommended that the sample size should be large enough to elaborate and answer the research question; however, small enough to include pertinent data to fulfill saturation.

The criteria for knowing an accurate number of participants is sufficient and saturation of information, whereas practical demands of other resources may lead some researchers to forego saturation (Seidman, 2013). Ando, Cousins, and Young (2014) conducted a study that consisted of 12 participants, which was a sufficient sample size for reaching saturation. Various factors affect sample size in qualitative studies; however, researchers typically use saturation as a guiding fundamental during data collection (Mason, 2010). Sample sizes should be from 5 to 50 justifying saturation, which is the point where the data collection process no longer entails any new or relevant data (Dworkin, 2012). The interview process for this study continued until saturation fulfillment, which occurred after interviewing Participant CE-5.

Prior to the interview date, I recommended verbally to participants to choose a familiar location that promotes a comfortable telephone interview environment as suggested by Scheibe, Reichelt, Bellmann, and Kirch (2015). Verner and Abdullah (2012) recommended that researchers allow study participants to select a private setting where participants can share their experience about the phenomenon. Study participants should choose a location where distractions are minimal (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Moreno, Goniu, Moreno, and Diekema (2013) suggested that privacy is a fundamental consideration for research setting. Telephone interviews are an equivalent alternate to face-to-face interviews (Anyan, 2013). Conversely, telephone interviews can be less engaging and participants may request additional interpretation or description (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury 2013). Trier-Bieniek (2012) suggested that conducting telephone interviews is time-efficient, researcher-friendly, and garners expeditious turnaround of participants.

Interviewing participants was an ongoing process until the identification of saturation; however, after interviewing at least 20 participants, the goal was to reach saturation. I reached data saturation after interviewing Participant CE-5. I continued to interview until reaching 20 participants and confirmed these additional interviews provided no new information. Marshall et al. (2013) suggested that data saturation refers to using enough participants until data repetition occurs. O'Reilly & Parker (2013) recommended that when information is redundant and participants do not share new information during the data collection process, data saturation is confirmed. Quality of interviews, number of interviews per participant, sampling procedures, and the researcher's level of experience are contributing factors that influence saturation fulfillment (Gupta & Hodges, 2012).

Ethical Research

Preceding data collection, the Walden University IRB evaluated and approved the research proposal as complying with the university's ethical protection standards.

Researchers are responsible to ensure the compliance of ethical practices (Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor, 2013). Prior to interviewing participants, I obtained a letter of cooperation (see Appendix C) from the police department’s authorizing representative granting permission to interview employees. Upon receiving the endorsement to interview employees and a list of potential participants from the target organization’s survey department, individuals received information to review before participating in the study. The information included an electronic invitation to participate, consent and confidentiality form, and a sample of the interview questions. Qualitative researchers must obtain permission from each research participant to conduct an interview (Rowley, 2012). Research participants returned the form electronically or by fax. I provided participants the opportunity to review the consent form to obtain knowledge regarding the purpose of the study, gain understanding about the study, and formulate questions for clarification prior to the interview process. The purpose of the consent form was to provide an explanation regarding protection of participants' rights and provide an explanation that research information will remain confidential. The scheduling of interviews began upon receipt of the signed consent form from qualifying participants. I asked participants for permission to record their statement before the interview started to use for later analysis. Simola, Barling, and Turner (2012) noted that recording interviews supports the accuracy of the content. Requiring study participants consent for interview recording ensures individuals are aware of the interview process (Jensen, Ammentorp, Erlandsen, & Ording, 2012).

Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without penalty by the following methods: verbally by telephone or in person, electronically by fax or email, or in writing by mail. Damianakis and Woodford (2012) recommended that researchers provide the option to each participant to withdraw from a study without penalty or adverse action. I explained the withdrawal process to participants in the consent form. One participant withdrew from the study, verbally via telephone, prior to the interview process; however, I recruited an additional participant to interview. Individuals did not receive incentives for their participation in the study; however, participants received a one-page summary of the study results. Koocher (2014) noted participants could interpret incentives, such as monetary gifts, as misleading. For this reason, participants did not receive incentives for their engagement.

Participants received notification, via the consent form, that their information remains confidential and placed in a pass code protected safe from the date of the interview until destruction after 5 years. Researchers must treat participants ethically, gain informed consent, maintain privacy, and prevent any form of deception (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014). I am the only individual with the combination to the pass code protected lock. Walden University’s IRB approval number is 03-26-15-0224850.

I identified participants using an identification number of a numeral of 1 through 20 to protect each person's anonymity. Additionally, the letter *L* indicated a leader, the letter *E* indicated an employee, and the letters *CE* indicated a civilian employee. Participants received a code to protect their identities, per advice offered by Carlström and Ekman (2012). In research conducted by Decker, Calo, and Weer (2012) using voluntary participation, study participants did not receive an incentive for their participation. Study participants did not receive any type of incentive to participate in the study; however, I provided a one-page summary of the results to individuals upon their request.

In addition to this section, information regarding the consent is under the Participants heading of this study. Appendix A includes the interview questions used in this study. I noted Appendix A in the Ethical Research, Participants, and Data Collection Technique sections. Appendix B entails the transcription confidentiality form, which is also referenced in the Ethical Research and Data Collection sections of this study. Appendix C is the letter of cooperation from the target organization, which I listed in the Ethical Research and Participants' sections of this study. Appendix D encompasses the interview protocol, as listed in the Table of Contents.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative phenomenological study, and conducted semistructured in-depth telephone interviews. As the primary collection instrument, qualitative researchers analyze individual beliefs and assumptions, which may influence the data collection and the data analysis of a study (Chakraverty & Tai, 2013). Bernard (2013) recommended that researchers demonstrate collection instrument validity through interview questions, which allows answers with appropriate precision. I used 10 open-ended interview questions for leaders and a different set of 10 questions for employees (see Appendix B). Interviews represent one of the prevailing techniques of collecting data in qualitative research as researchers gain opportunities to gather rich and meaning-making data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). By using semistructured interview procedures, researchers can probe participants (Whittemore, 2014).

Toy and Ok (2012) explained that by using semistructured interviews, researchers may capture the subjects' perspectives, have access to contextually pertinent and rich information, and decrease potential bias present in unstructured interviews. At the root of in-depth interviewing is the desire to understand lived experiences of other individuals and the meaning that make up the experience (Seidman, 2013). A data collection instrument, such as an interview protocol, can be foundational to ensuring research validity. The interview protocol is in Appendix E, as noted in the Table of Contents. For this study, the interview protocol included an explanation for the following items: selecting participants, scheduling interviews, explaining the purpose of the research, recording the interview, interview questions, wrap –up interview, transcript review, and member checking. An interview protocol allows the researcher to use the same data collection technique for each interview (Stewart, Polak, Young, & Schultz, 2012). The use of an interview protocol ensures that the researcher addresses all areas of the study (Rich, 2012). An interview protocol serves as a guide for an ethical and unbiased interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

In this study, I exercised transcript review by offering participants the opportunity to review their transcript statement to ensure accuracy and member checking by allowing participants to review my interpretations of the findings, per advice by Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011). Through transcript review, participants can review the information and provide additional responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Researchers should verify the transcriptions with study participants (Pereira, 2012), as transcript review ensures confirmation of recording and accuracy of documentation (Lackmann, Ernstberger, & Stich, 2012). Member checking enables researchers to evaluate their personal views to avoid potential bias in interpreting collected data (Haper & Cole, 2012). Reilly (2013) used member checking in qualitative research that would allow participants to provide additional information in the member checking process. Additionally, member checking is fundamental in determining if descriptions and themes accurately reflect the participant views (Yilmaz, 2013).

Data Collection Technique

According to Thomson, Petty, Ramage, and Moore (2011), one purpose for collecting information via interviews is to comprehend participants' experiences and meanings in the field, in order to answer the research question. The objective for the interview process is to produce relevant information to understand a phenomenon (Thomson, Petty, Ramage, & Moore, 2011). Data generated during the interview process is viable to the researcher while conducting the investigation, considering the information could prove to be an imperative resource of continuing value to other researchers

(Cliggett, 2013). While conducting qualitative interviews, researchers target to comprehend human behavior, obtain information and meaning, and attain knowledge from participants (Rossetto, 2014).

To assist me in gaining access to study participants, the target organization's Research and Planning Department personnel granted permission for me to contact employees. The authorizing representative provided a list of employee names as potential participants. I sent an electronic invitation to participate in the study, consent and confidentiality form, and a sample of the interview questions (see Appendix A) to the potential participants. Additional information in the consent form included: (a) purpose of the study, (b) research title, and (c) participant's role in the study. The purpose of the consent form was to provide an explanation regarding protection of participants' rights, and provide an explanation that research information will remain confidential. Participant's confidentiality is critical to ensure research content does not identify individuals within the target organization (Bogdanovic, Dowd, Wattam, & Adam, 2012). Once participants returned the consent form electronically or by fax, I began to schedule interviews. Qualitative interviews represent the common way of collecting data considering these interviews enable researchers to obtain rich and meaningful information (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). I contacted participants by telephone or via email to schedule the interview date. Confirmation of participants' interview dates was according to their availability and previously scheduled interviews. Participants received a sample of the interview questions (see Appendix A) and I ensured participants that their information would remain private and confidential and they would have the option to withdraw voluntarily from the study. Dekas and McCune (2015) recommended that researchers offer participants confidence in their commitment to data privacy resulting in researchers engaging in complex activities if participants trust proper handling of their data.

Prior to the start of the interview, I provided a personal introduction, detailed the purpose of the study, the role of the study participant, and reiterated the withdrawal policy. Researchers should define their backgrounds to expound to readers possible bias regarding the interpretation of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I exercised this suggestion by explaining my role as a leader and a follower in the workplace as recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2011). The purpose of the introduction was to establish a rapport with study participants. Informing individuals of recording requirements at the time of that person's interview and seeking permission to proceed with the interview occurred prior to asking the first question. Requiring participant consent for recording the interview ensures individuals are knowledgeable and comfortable with all factors of the interview process (Jensen et al., 2012). Recording interviews promotes accuracy of the content (Simola, Barling, & Turner, 2012). Once a trusting environment was evident, by the tone of each study participant’s voice and receipt of permission to record that person's responses, the interview process began.

The interview process began with casual conversation tailored toward creating a comfortable environment, and the opportunity for the participant to think about experiences related to the research phenomenon as recommended by Moustakas (1994). Researchers should build rapport quickly with study participants during the interview process to allow participants the opportunity to feel comfortable while sharing their experience (Bartkowiak, 2012). Rossetto (2014) recommended researchers to build rapport, listen to, and understand their study participants. Establishing trust with participants early in the process enables them to respond willingly to the research process (Anderson, 2013). Qualitative researchers construct study-specific, open-ended interview questions to obtain knowledge of a phenomenon (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014). Once the interview started, participants could ask questions for clarification and take time to provide in-depth information in their response to each question. I captured each interview using a digital recorder with the capability to upload responses to my personal computer for playback and transcription.

A qualitative interview is advantageous for researchers considering researchers can attempt to understand the world of the participants, gain insights, and discover implications of a business phenomenon (Thomson et al., 2011). Using a semistructured interview process is fundamental for researchers to ensure accurate evaluation of study participants (Rowley, 2012). Moustakas (1994) recommended that study participants spend time and reflect on their experience prior to offering a response to the interview questions so they can elaborate on the experience. I conducted in-depth semistructured telephone interviews and participants shared their lived experiences regarding the phenomenon. Cachia and Millward (2011) noted that study participants perceive telephone interviews as an effective means to maintain their anonymity, and telephone interviews are an appropriate mode to collect sensitive information.

A pilot study represents a cornerstone of an effective research design and is a pertinent initial step in research that applies to diverse research topics (Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015). Researchers who use pilot study activities could identify problems related to participant recruitment, potential interviewer bias, and pertinent interview content (Kim, 2011). Seidman (2013) recommended researchers build a pilot into their study to determine if the research structure is appropriate for the study. Contrary to Seidman's (2013) recommendation, Pritchard and Whiting (2012) suggested that in qualitative approaches, pilot studies are not necessary considering that the researcher can obtain knowledge during the data collection process. Although conducting a pilot study could be beneficial for the researcher by testing their interview protocol and discovering hidden bias, for this study, I did not seek approval from the IRB to conduct a pilot study for the interview process as I anticipated I could gain knowledge regarding the research topic through the use of semistructured interviews.

The interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions relating to the subject of how leaders recognized employees in the workplace. Each participant had an opportunity before and after the interview to ask questions. Wahyuni (2012) noted that individual interviews should last no longer than 90 minutes. Conversely, Cachia and Millward (2011) suggested that semistructured telephone interviews last no longer than 60 minutes. The anticipation was that each interview session for this study would last approximately 45 minutes; therefore, I did not schedule back-to-back interviews to ensure adequate time in the event interviews exceeded the allotted time. Telephone interviews are appropriate for a study when there is a need for anonymity, questions that will enable participants to provide meaningful responses, and when using purposive sampling (Block & Erskine, 2012). The scheduling process allowed time for study participants to share their experience; however, the allotted time for interviews was approximately 45 minutes. Appendix B includes a copy of the interview questions.

I offered participants the opportunity to review their transcripts to ensure accuracy, per recommendation by Hanson et al. (2011). Providing participants the opportunity to view their transcripts enables them to identify misunderstanding (McNulty, 2012). Participant validation of transcripts might enhance trustworthiness (Ozertugrul, 2015). Once I analyzed the data, participants had an opportunity to review, through member checking, my interpretations of the findings. Allowing too much time between the data collection process and member checking process could result in participants forgetting interview details (Harper & Cole, 2012). Through member checking, participants may offer feedback, which supports the credibility of the results (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Reilly (2013) noted in qualitative research participants can add information in the member checking process.

Data Organization Techniques

I maintained a separate file in Microsoft Word® with a transcription of each person's responses to preserve confidentiality. Anyan (2012) suggested that creating data organization techniques enables researchers to maintain the integrity of transcribed interviews, audio interviews, and any backup information pertaining to the data storage process. Computer software can add consistency to qualitative research by improving data accuracy, transparency, and audit analysis, (Rowley, 2012). Data management methods should be controlled and retrievable by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A third party transcription company transcribed all interviews and signed a confidentiality form to ensure participant responses remain private (see Appendix C). I extended the opportunity to study participants to assess their transcript, and upon request, participants received a copy of their transcript to review for accuracy.

Organizing data can be a complex task for qualitative researchers. In addition to building and organizing data, NVivo®10 text coding capabilities allow researchers to enhance critiquing specific pieces of literature, aggregating themes, and building arguments supported by the literature (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Coding relates to the analysis that determines themes, categories, and concepts from the collected data (Da Mota Pedrosa, Naslund, & Jasmand, 2012). Specific coding ensures the protection of participant identity (Marais, 2012). I used NVivo®10 to assist with the coding process. Upon gathering all data through telephone interviews, I organized files according to the order of participants' interviews and uploaded data into NVivo®10 software for data analysis. Trotter (2012) suggested that qualitative researchers use NVivo®10 to code thematic categories and extract themes from participants' interview responses to answer the research question.

Journaling may reduce the possibility of bias in the research process if researchers execute a method that enables them to follow their individual beliefs, values, and presumptions, which could affect the research results (Hayman, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2012). The use of journaling eliminates interview bias (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I used a journal to capture my thoughts by writing notes and reviewing my records during the process as a method to mitigate bias. Researchers write notes from participant interview responses according to textual and verbal forms of data (White & Drew, 2011). This type of journaling allowed me to note any potential biases and to remain focused on the study topic and participants' responses. Limited information is available regarding the benefits of using journals as a component of the research process to capture additional data and form the skills of the researcher (Lamb, 2013). I formatted my journal notes in chronological order and included the date and time of the interviews to enhance organization techniques. To ensure confidentiality, journal entries did not include names of study participants, rather each participant received a letter and number as follows: The letter *L* symbolizes a leader, the letter *E* symbolizes an employee, and the letters *CE* symbolizes civilian employee. Numerals 1-20 followed each letter. To prevent accidental disclosure of sensitive data obtained during the study, such as names and identity, proper safeguards are necessary (Pletcher, Lo, & Grandy, 2015). Concealing participants' identity by assigning aliases to replace names during data transcription and throughout the study is crucial (Xie, Wu, Luo, & Hu, 2010). Johnson (2014) used alphabetical letters to recognize participants in a research study.

Data archiving is the process of ensuring that data resources are available for future exploitation by researchers (Corti, 2012). Data protection for electronic information included storing information on a password-protected external hard drive. A user name and password is required to access on the lap top computer that was used during data collection. Safekeeping plan for hard copy data included storing data in a combination lock safe for a minimum of 5 years. Torrance (2012) noted researchers should store data for 3-10 years. Goth (2012) recommended storing research data for 10 years. At the end of 5 years, I will permanently delete electronic data and fire will destroy hard copy data.

Data Analysis Technique

Moustakas (1994), through the modified seven steps originally designed by van Kaam, provided the process to analyze data in a phenomenological research study. The seven steps include: (a) transcribing the interviews, (b) coding, (c) grouping themes, (d) checking participants consistency, (e) describing experiences, (f) recognizing common patterns within the data, and (g) synthesizing meaning of experiences. Employing Moustakas's seven steps in this study enabled me to interpret the data effectively. Moustakas (1994) suggested that qualitative researchers identify compelling words and phrases that enhance the comprehension of the individual experience regarding the phenomenon.

With NVivo®10 software text coding functions, researchers can enhance building evidence supported by the literature (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). I used NVivo®10 software to evaluate data using search, query, and visualization tools. Using NVivo®10 software allowed me to manage and organize various types of unstructured data, code qualitative data from open-ended questions, and assign numbers to codes, per the advice of Castleberry (2012). NVivo®10 software enables researchers to add notes in designated areas of the software regarding insights and ideas concerning the study and participants. In addition, researchers can sort and categorize data to identify themes. By using NVivo®10 software, qualitative researchers have the ability to import various formats, including Microsoft Word®, and Portable Document Formats© (Castleberry, 2014).

Consistent with research conducted by Carlström and Ekman (2012), data interpretation for this study included codes to protect participants' identity. Study participants received the letter *L* for leaders, the letter *E* for employees, the letters *CE* for civilian employees, and a numeral between 1-20 for identification. Data coding occurred according to the responses participants shared regarding their experience as related to recognition within their organization. In doing so, I attempted to address a gap in business practice for the need of enhanced leadership development by targeting both individual leaders and the social context in which leadership occurs as it relates to rewarding employees. The analysis provided insight regarding the skills leaders use to recognize employees for their organizational contributions. I connected the overall data analysis to the research question, conceptual framework, and related literature by identifying common key terms and themes to conclude skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. An objective of obtaining thorough information from study participants was to analyze the data through the lens of the conceptual framework as the literature related to employee recognition, rewards, and LMX.

Encouraging employees to increase work performance is difficult in the business environment where employees are seeking better opportunities (Chaurasia & Shukla, 2014). LMX theorists suggested that employees in higher LMX relationships have an advantage and more access to resources than employees in lower LMX relationships (Geertshuis et al., 2015). Individuals recognize the leader-member relationship as a key factor of successful working relationships and business outcomes (Nie & Lamsa, 2015). According to the tenets of LMX, a high-quality relationship must exist between the leader and employee before the leader will engage in supportive supervision (Matthews & Toumbeva, 2015). Leaders need to ensure employee rewards are effective, motivate the desired behavior, and link to performance (Chomal & Baruah, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative studies, trustworthiness is a criterion to test the quality of research (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Qualitative researchers should establish the reliability and validity of the study to ensure trustworthiness throughout the research (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Researchers suggested four criteria to achieve the goal of trustworthiness in qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Ali & Yusof, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term *trustworthiness* as the qualitative equivalent to quantitative validity. More so, qualitative researchers have advanced several strategies for addressing validity issues. These strategies are: (a) prolonged engagement, (b) triangulation, (c) peer review or debriefing, (d) negative case analysis, (e) clarifying researcher bias, (f) rich, thick description, and (g) member checking. Using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, is the common method to verify reliability and validity as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Reliability

Reliability is defined as dependable, consistent, and repeatable research (Miner-Romanoff, 2012, whereas the research entails a rigorous process that reveals reliable and useful results (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). The challenge of depicting quality research insights often links to the issue of reliability of qualitative research (Kapoulas & Mitic, 2012). In qualitative research, reliability, which is equivalent to dependability, future researchers can accomplish uniformity of results when following the same methods and procedures (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). To assure reliability, researchers should present precise reviews of previous literature that link to the study and a nonbiased description of the findings. Asking clear and concise interview questions assisted to improve the reliability of responses (White & Drew, 2011). The use of member checking diminishes biases and highlights comprehensive information that was not inclusive in a single data source (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Member checking permits each study member to review the interpretation of the data from their interview to ensure trustfulness and credibility of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Participants can review study results and offer feedback on the accuracy of the identified themes (Harper & Cole, 2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as the most critical step in ensuring trustworthiness. Hudson et al. (2014) explained that researchers that conduct member checking can verify the accuracy of the information received from study participants.

Yin (2013) suggested that dependability ensures a sense of trust in research, whereas, Colbert, Wyatt-Smith, and Klenowski (2012) indicated that dependability includes process reliability. Qualitative researchers strengthen dependability by including descriptions of modifications in the research setting and effects on the research approach regarding the study (Zachariadis, Scott, & Barrett, 2013). Additionally, enhancing the dependability of research findings include describing the purpose of a study and discussing the process for selecting study participants (Elo, et al., 2014). In this study, I verified dependability by ensuring consistency of the processes throughout the study as outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix E).

Cope (2014) defined confirmability as the ability to demonstrate that the research data reflect participants' responses rather than the researcher’s biased viewpoints. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described confirmability as the degree of neutrality in the study findings formed by the participants and the researcher's interest. Findings from qualitative research can contribute information regarding the mechanisms that cause the event at the experimental level (Zachariadis et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers should ask themselves throughout the research process whether they ask appropriate questions, change questions when feasible, and view participants' experiences from as many perspectives as possible (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). In qualitative inquiry, confirmability relates to others confirming the study results. I assured confirmability through member checking, and during the interview process, I recorded notes in an attempt to recognize bias per recommendation from White, Oelke, and Friesen (2012). Additionally, I enhanced confirmability by omitting personal preconceptions of participants' responses.

Validity

Validity often represents the level of quality and rigor of research (Zachariadis et al., 2013). Rennie (2012) argued that providing a meaning for validity might be challenging because no universal definition exists to specify the concept. Validity enables researchers to explore different aspects of the affiliation between the analysis and the observed conclusion (Muchinsky & Raines, 2013). Moustakas (1994) observed that data validity depends upon interview questions that allow participants to detail their lived experiences. Numerous threats to validity may arise that will raise concerns regarding a researcher’s capability to determine what type of interference can influence an outcome. I compared the conceptual framework and participant responses to ensure consistency.

Using member checking enables participants to review the researcher's interpretation (Hanson et al., 2011). Additionally, using member checking allowed participants to confirm that their lived experiences had a definite description that ensured validity (Hanson et al., 2011). Through the member checking process, participants can provide additional information regarding the study topic (Reilly, 2013). I utilized member checking to address credibility, by offering study participants a copy of the data interpretations and seeking their input.

In qualitative research, transferability is the applicability of study results to other subjects or sites of study with comparable characteristics (Petty et al., 2012). Transferability refers to transferring the study results to other samples or settings on a broad basis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described transferability as the trustworthiness measure used to develop detailed and context relevant statements that could transfer to other samples and settings. Elo et al. (2014) suggested that to ensure transferability of the findings of qualitative studies to other contexts or settings, researchers should provide details regarding the collected data and any assumptions relevant to the research. Matching the data with information in current literature should enhance transferability (Brod et al., 2009). To improve transferability in this study, I used purposeful sampling and fully described the population and the research setting. This may allow readers to draw conclusions regarding transferability of the findings. Keane, Lincoln, and Smith (2012) stated that transferability of qualitative research results to other situations can be challenging and may require a broader context.

Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) defined credibility as the value and believability of research findings. Qualitative researchers use credibility to verify whether study results are credible based on participants' feedback (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Elo et al. (2014) noted that the findings of qualitative research are credible when the results represent an accurate interpretation of human experiences and individuals who encounter the same experience can relate to the study findings. According to Harvey, Cushion, and Sammon (2015), credibility increases through critical evaluation of participants' responses, which enables the researcher to identify similarities and irregularities. At the conclusion of the interviews, participants had the opportunity, through transcript review, to validate the textual data to ensure authenticity regarding participants’ responses. Participants received instructions via email to submit a request within 24 hours of receiving the correspondence to review their transcript for accuracy. I submitted participants’ transcripts within 48 hours upon receiving their inquiry. Participants did not submit a request to review their transcript for accuracy. Through transcript review, participants can check their transcript for accuracy, make necessary corrections, and offer additional feedback (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). A transcript of interviews ensures confirmation or recording and accuracy of documentation (Muchinsky & Raines, 2012). Through transcript review, participants could reassess their transcription to confirm that the data was accurate. Participants received the opportunity to reassess their statement following the interview, at the conclusion of the transcription process. Torrance (2012) suggested that researchers allow participants to verify the accuracy of their responses to the interview questions and ask questions for clarification. I compared participants’ transcripts with their recorded statement to ensure error-free interview transcriptions.

Once I generated codes for the collected data, I conducted member checking by allowing participants the opportunity to review the interpretation of the findings. Through member checking, interviewees received a summary of the results according to all 20 participants’ responses, to review my interpretation of the findings. Participants could offer feedback, which promotes the credibility of the results (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Study participants received the utmost respect during the interview process as a way of reassuring participants that their information will remain confidential in the study. By using member checking, study participants can review the researcher's interpretations of their real-life experiences (Harper & Cole, 2012). Including member checking can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Chronister, Marsiglio, Linville, & Lantrip, 2014).

Marshall et al. (2013) recommended that data saturation is evident when participants share repetitive information regarding the phenomenon. Data saturation is the intrinsic point at which adding new content adds no new data (Thomson et al., 2011). Recruiting relevant study participants increases the probability to fulfill data saturation (Suri, 2011). I achieved data saturation after interviewing Participant CE-5. Achieving data saturation further improved the credibility of the study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included information regarding: (a) the role of the researcher, (b) research method and design, (c) population and sampling, (d) ethical research (e) data collection, and (f) reliability and validity. Section 3 includes: (a) an overview of the study, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) implications for social change, and (d) recommendations for further study. Study results entailed information regarding how the findings may influence social change and outline gaps in the literature that may require further research. Study results assisted in identifying recommendations for further action according to the analysis of the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity. The study population consisted of sworn officers and civilian employees of a police department located in southwestern North Carolina. Each participant engaged in an in-depth, semistructured telephone interview and responded to 10 open-ended questions regarding employee recognition. The central research question that guided this study was: *What skills do leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity?* Interview questions consisted of two sets; one set was for leaders and the second set for employees.

Common themes emerged during the analysis of interview transcriptions. Themes emerged as a result of repetition of common terms and phrases. Overall findings for this study indicated five primary themes associated with skills leaders used to recognize employees for enhanced productivity: (a) employee motivation, (b) ineffective leadership, (c) leader-employee communication, (d) motivational recognition, and (e) positive leader-employee relationship. The tables following each theme depict the nodes or categories. The leadership behaviors and experiences characterized by study participants demonstrated the types of recognition that motivated employees to increase productivity and how the lack of recognition discouraged employees. Additionally, interviewees' descriptions of recognition practices demonstrated by leaders indicated that leaders extended recognition to employees in various forms to keep employees motivated to increase productivity. The following section provides a presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implication for social change, recommendation for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question guiding this study was: *What skills do leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity?* Study participants responded to 10 interview questions concerning recognition employees received for productivity or recognition leaders extended to employees for work productivity. The definitive focus enabled me to conclude that recognition is vital in organizations as a tool to create high productivity as construed by Sawalha and Zaitouni (2012).

I utilized Moustakas's (1994) modified seven steps, originally designed by van Kaam, to analyze the data in this phenomenological research study. The seven steps include: (a) transcribing the interviews, (b) coding, (c) grouping themes, (d) checking participants' consistency, (e) describing experiences, (f) recognizing common patterns within the data, and (g) synthesizing meaning of experiences. Five themes emerged from the collected data during my analysis: (a) employee motivation, (b) ineffective leadership, (c) leader-employee communication, (d) motivational recognition, and (e) positive leader-employee relationship.

I imported data into QSR International's NVivo®10 software. Each sentence and passage of the text received one or more codes. Codes developed from study participants' words and I added or modified these codes as necessary as new meanings or categories formed. Upon establishing codes, I compared systematically each piece of text and assigned the text to one code. After comparing and assigning text to one code, I reviewed codes and assigned text to assess coding consistency. In the following section, I provide the results of the analysis for each theme. Furthermore, I will discuss participants' responses, data analysis procedures, emerging themes, and the relationship between employee recognition and LMX.

The in-depth telephone interviews enabled me to gain knowledge regarding the types of recognition leaders extended to employees and the types of recognition that motivate employees to increase productivity. Employee participants expressed concern with regards to the frequency, or the lack thereof, of employee recognition, whereas leader participants shared a sense of satisfaction with the regularity and types of awards they extend. Considering the nature of the job, employees felt organizational leaders should acknowledge employee performance with monetary gifts in addition to plaques, written, and verbal recognition. Overall, responses from leaders and employees revealed that most employees were satisfied with the types of recognition leaders extended for exemplary acts, whereas some employees felt organizational leaders could show greater support.

Theme 1: Employee Motivation

Recognizing individuals for exemplary acts may create a committed, engaged, and responsible workforce; however, should leaders fail to identify any ineffectiveness of employee motivation, organizational goals could remain unmet. The first theme to emerge from the data collection was the types of recognition leaders extended to employees that motivate employees to increase productivity. Leader and employee participants' responses to interview questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 comprised Theme 1. Nodes for Theme 1 were: awards and verbal recognition. The participant's role within the target organization determined the response regarding employee recognition. Several employees felt satisfied with the amount of recognition leaders extended for exemplary acts, whereas, others were not.

Awards. Participant responses varied regarding the type of awards leaders extended to their employees. Responses indicated that factors of awards and recognition are vital for employee motivation and job performance. Most of the participants shared that awards provided are in the form of nonmonetary benefits and in most cases, awards motivate employees to increase performance. Although employees were thankful for receiving awards as a form of recognition, several participants stated that they would like the organizational leaders to extend recognition with greater meaning, such as paid time off. When asked, "how does your leader recognize employees for increased productivity?" Participant CE-4 shared, "It's usually by a commendation letter. Some- majority of them, I should say, will tell you you're doing good." Participant L-3 stated, "Either verbal praise or written praise or just kind of lead by example." Chomal and Baruah (2014) suggested that to ensure a reward system is effective and motivates employees to increase productivity, linking the reward to performance is essential.

According to Chomal and Baruah (2014), the purpose of reward systems is to attract, retain, and motivate employees; therefore, when extending awards to employees, leaders should recognize the different sources of motivation.

Verbal recognition. Participant L-2 shared his thoughts on recognizing employees by stating, ". . . verbal praise is one way to motivate and another way is doing what we call write outs for performance . . ." Participant E6 indicated:

> Well, the way our Sergeant goes about it is she is very-loves to recognize us for doing the right thing and for going above and beyond our call of duty. So what she would do is, we usually have SR meetings and when we have our SR meetings, she makes sure to recognize that officer or those officers during those meetings.

Feys, Anseel, and Willie (2013) suggested that employee recognition is conceptualized as the assignment of individual nonmonetary awards to support desired behaviors of increased productivity demonstrated by employees after these behaviors occur. Participant CL-5 stated, “Usually in a simple way is just to recognize their work, the work they do day in and day out.”

According to the analyses of the responses, all (100%) of leaders and employees expressed consideration on personal experiences regarding recognition leaders extended to employees and recognition employees received from leaders for increased productivity. Leaders stated they extended various types of rewards to their employees, and likewise, employees shared their experience with receiving rewards as recognition.

According to leader responses, the type of awards and recognition they extended to their employees was at the discretion of that particular leader; however, as police officers, employees were aware that enhanced productivity was an expectation of the organization. Study participants, particularly employee participants, elaborated on how the organization demonstrated support for the work employees performed daily; however, of the 20 participants, many did not express complete satisfaction or hesitated to provide great detail, considering the sensitivity and privacy of their job. Several participants mentioned receiving specific types of rewards as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Employee Motivation

Nodes	No. of Participant Sources	% of Participant Sources
Leaders Who Offered Awards	10	50
Employee Who Received Awards	10	50
Awards as a Major Factor of Recognition	6	30
Verbal Recognition	8	40
Employee of the Month	2	10

A total of 6/20 participants (30%) indicated that receiving awards is a major factor regarding employee recognition. Participant CE1 noted:

> So currently, the only thing supervisors do to recognize us, they'll you know tell you you did a good job and or write it down on paper. Sometimes they'll recognize you for an award at the end of the year…an award ceremony presented

> by your boss, the Chief of Police, which is very nice.

Likewise, participant L-6 stated:

> There’s several different ways that we or that I recognize employees for increased productivity. It includes anything from verbally recognizing both in public and private and also in written format, which we have called the Performance Review entries we put in the personnel file. And then on special occasions, we recognize them with awards and recognitions by events and command staff meetings and from time to time during Police weeks to the public or the community like community meetings.

Consistent with the results obtained by Olughor and Oke (2014) regarding factors that increase employee productivity, Marshall, Mottier, and Lewis (2015) reported that understanding what motivates employees at different levels of management and the different stages of employee careers is beneficial to understand what practices are favorable to increase employee productivity. Prior to 2014, few researchers focused on the difference in reward preferences exemplified by law enforcement employees and other employees in the public sector. Participant L-8 stated: “They understand the fact that I care about what they do. . .” Leader participants’ responses revealed that when employees realized their leader was aware of their work ethics and behaviors, employees performance increased.

Marshall et al. (2015) demonstrated that when leaders provide recognition to employees, motivate employees, and remove obstacles preventing effective performance, the recognition gives employees the confidence to increase productivity. Recognition of the work performed by employees will motivate employees to increase productivity (Sokro, 2012). Participant CL-5 shared: “I motivate them by getting them engaged as far as seeking their input in division meetings where everyone is together.” Leaders shared that publicly recognizing employees in the presence of their peers for enhanced productivity motivates employees to increase their performance. Additionally, seeking employee input regarding various work-related matters caused employees to increase their engagement.

Guillen, Ferrero, and Hoffman (2015) indicated that understanding what motivates employees is pivotal to the success of the organization. Hauser (2014) defined motivation as what energizes, directs, and sustains a person’s behavior. Motivation is a source of positive energy influencing people in their workplace or private life (Hauser, 2014). Tenure in an organization relates to employee motivation (Oberfield, 2014). Sufficient, highly-motivated, and skillful employees are vital components of a well-developed organization (Saleem, Tufail, Atta, & Asghar, 2015). Employees who are motivated perform well and function positively in their organization and perform their duties in a productive and efficient way (Saleem el al., 2015). Hauser discovered that motivated employees enhance efforts and direct contribution to accomplish the organization’s objectives, resulting in increased employee satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is a complicated concept, with various meanings to a variety of different people (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Fakhar Zaman, Nas, Ahmed, Raja, and Khan

Mari (2013) defined employee job satisfaction as an enjoyable emotional state emerging from the judgment of one’s job, a sentimental response to one’s job or an approach toward an individual’s job. Conversely, law enforcement officers indicated that one of the primary reasons for work-related dissatisfaction is stress directly linked to the organizational characteristics of the workplace (Kula & Guler, 2014). Law enforcement officers' immediate leaders could exert influence over employee productivity (Johnson, 2011). Interventions made by employees' superiors that focus on various aspects of job satisfaction, such as employee recognition, may enhance law enforcement personnel's commitment (Spagnoli & Caetano, 2012). Leaders within police departments focus on demands of providing a good work environment while attempting to increase job satisfaction to improve motivation, morale, and performance (Yang, Yen, & Chiang, 2012).

Feedback represents a fundamental component in the process of assessing employees' competencies and enables leaders to evaluate the performance of employees (Toader & Lungu, 2015). Public sector motivation differs from private sector motivation (French & Emerson, 2014). The public sector includes federal, state, and local government employees, such as police officers. While public sector employees are interested in job security, career tenure, and benefits associated with government employment, these employees also demonstrate intrinsic motives (French & Emerson, 2014). Police officers and other public sector employees placed a substantially higher value on tasks that made employees feel a level of accomplishment and work that was helpful to society (French & Emerson, 2014).

Theme 2: Ineffective Leadership

The second theme to emerge evolved from participants' responses regarding skills leaders demonstrated to ensure the recognition of employee performance. Contents of Theme 2 evolved from responses to interview questions 5, 6, and 7. Study participants discussed their experiences regarding lack of recognition and skills leaders used to improve their ability to recognize employees. Nodes for Theme 2 were: (a) infrequent recognition, (b) ineffective recognition, and (c) inconsistent recognition.

Infrequent recognition. Participant CE-5 shared, "For the recognition, nothing overzealous because it doesn't happen often, so I don't think anybody is really shocked." Employee responses revealed that recognition leaders extended was a gesture of respect and gratitude. Employees expressed appreciation for plaques, email recognition, public acknowledgement, and luncheons; however, employees did not feel organizational leaders go above and beyond to ensure they are recognized for their performance. Additionally, participant CL-7 reported, ". . . So all of my kudos don't come from up above, they actually come from the officers that I serve." Participant CL-7 shared, "There is no recognition for increased productivity." Some participants felt individuals they affect in the community are more appreciative of their service than leaders within the organization. Several study participants did not feel that leaders recognize employees as often as they should considering the type of work employees execute daily.

Ineffective recognition. Consistent with results noted by Kafetsios, Nezlek, and Vassiou (2011) regarding influence on employee behavior, Ertureten et al. (2013) explained that ineffective leaders could be the cause for lowered organizational commitment, decreased job satisfaction, and high turnover rate. Leadership researchers recognize that leaders play a crucial role in facilitating positive employee behaviors (Jaramillo, Bande, & Varela, 2015). Participant CE-1 indicated, "I work for a supervisor that has little to no leadership abilities whatsoever." Conversely, CE-3 stated, “Actually, I’ve worked with leaders before where they have no people skills and it’s hard for them to realize people.” When asked about the type of leadership skills leaders possessed that motivate employees to perform exemplary acts, Participant CE-5 noted, "none.” Employee participants’ responses affirmed that there was not a culture of frequent recognition, nor did leaders traditionally appreciate the work employees executed. Participant responses also revealed that leaders expected employees to perform on high levels, as increased productivity is a requirement of the organization. Employee participants indicated that organizational leaders recognized employees for increased productivity; however, recognition was not frequently extended. Considering infrequent employee acknowledgment, there was a need for improvement regarding leaders obtaining skills necessary to reward employees for increased productivity.

Inconsistent recognition. When asked to elaborate on recognition leaders extended to employees, Participant E-8 shared, “The culture isn’t overly appreciative of what subordinates do. There isn’t a culture of huge recognition . . . it doesn’t exist.”

Employees expressed concern that the organizational leaders should demonstrate value and appreciation for the detectives as they value patrol performance, considering the nature of detectives’ jobs. Failure to frequently recognize detectives within the police department created a negative culture for several years. In the words of Participant CE-5, “Honestly speaking I would have to say no, it’s not consistent.” Participant CE-1 shared: “So I think that that’s the biggest thing right now that we have a problem with in policing is the failure to recognize positive employee actions and we’re doing focusing more on penalizing negative employee actions."

A total of 7/20 participants (35%) shared their experience on ineffective leadership within the organization. Table 2 encompassed specific ineffective leadership behaviors that the seven participants identified.

Table 2

Ineffective Leadership

Nodes	No. of Participant Sources	% of Participant Sources
Employees Experiencing Ineffective Leadership	7	35
Infrequent Recognition	3	15
Ineffective Change	2	10
Inconsistency	2	10

Poor personal traits of leaders and skill shortages may result in ineffective leadership. Prior to 2013, few researchers conducted studies where they focused on ineffective leaders; rather, most researchers paid attention to influential leaders

(Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Woestman and Wasonga (2015) noted that 60% to 75% of employees reported that their immediate leader was the most stressful aspect of their job. Humborstad and Giessner (2015) shared that employees' perceptions of leaders might not be positive; therefore, employees raise the question of whether their supervisor's leadership style is ineffective. Employees have their own expectations of what leaders should or should not do in relation to their job duties or responsibilities (Humborstad & Giessner, 2015). Ineffective leadership has a negative influence on individuals and organizational performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013). Organizations may implement programs and policies with regard to awards and recognition, while simultaneously overlooking opportunities for appreciation, such as impromptu praise (Stocker, Jacobshagen, Krings, Pfister, & Semmer, 2014). Leadership is a factor leaders demonstrate to create and maintain an environment of sustainability (Metcalf & Benn, 2013). Ertureten et al. (2013) expressed the relevance of leaders stimulating interest among employees for new perspectives, generating awareness for the mission and vision of the organization, empowering employees to reach higher levels of potential, motivating employees to seek beyond personal interest, and considering benefits for other employees.

Theme 3: Leader-Employee Communication

Theme 3 emerged based on participants' responses regarding communication leaders and employee shared within the organization as the communication related to recognition. Theme 3 emerged from the responses to interview questions 5 and 6. The purpose of these questions was to explore participants' experiences regarding how recognition via communication motivates employees. Nodes for Theme 3 included: (a) written acknowledgment, (b) performance appraisal, (c) email, and (d) certificates. Fifteen of 20 participants (75%) shared their experience regarding the interconnection between communication and employee recognition.

Written acknowledgment. In the words of Participant CE-4, “To be honest I don’t think there is enough recognition for some, but when there is, it’s usually by a commendation letter.” Participant L-10 noted:

> I think they do show recognition in that sense because ultimately what they put on paper as far as – how the officer succeed, how the officer conducts himself, how he performs his duties. The thing is actually documented during that time as well.

Performance appraisal. Participants’ responses indicated that performance appraisal is an annual evaluation of employee performance over a 12 month period. Employees had to meet certain criteria to receive a satisfactory evaluation. In the event employees failed to perform on a satisfactory level in any category, leaders mentored these employees in the areas that needed improvement. Participant L-10 reported: “Well, they reward us by putting entries in our files – our PAR performance appraisal review.” Participant E-2 noted:

> They write out on it’s called a PRD, it’s a performance review and at any point in time during your career even at any time during the day, if they feel the need to recognize you, they will write that out and explain what it is that you’re doing.

Participants expressed the need for leaders to provide a clear understanding of the organizational goals and objectives and record this information in each employee's file. Possessing knowledge of the organizations' objectives enabled employees to establish personal goals within the organization.

Email. When asked to share the type of recognition leaders extended to employees for increased performance, Participant CE-5 shared: "Not much at all . . . quick email of you know, this is what you did and that's kind of about it." Participant L-1 stated: "Email or send that information out to the whole team so that everybody knows what the person is doing." Leaders' responses revealed that when employees achieved major tasks, they would share employee accomplishments with the team as a motivational tool. In addition to publicly recognizing employees via electronic communication, leaders also recognized employees at annual award ceremonies.

Certificates. Participant CE-7 shared, "We have personnel documentation if something exemplary or certificates of commendation if that applies." In the words of Participant L-6: "Certain documentation of achieving productivity, measures like I said on special occasions – recognition to awards, whether they're plaques, pins or other symbols of achievements and it's done in community meetings, communal staff meetings or just in regular staff meetings."

Without workplace communication, leaders and employees would not accomplish many tasks (Conrad, 2014). The link between leadership, communication, and human experience is well-established (Caputo & Crandall, 2012). Communication researchers suggest that organizational communication structure and leaders' behavior can influence employee involvement, motivation, and well-being (Jiang & Men, 2015). Conrad (2014) reported that employees believed their leaders are ineffective communicators and likewise, leaders shared the same belief about their employees.

Leaders who used effective communication strategies to relay information to employees increased job satisfaction (Abd-El-Salam, Shawky, El-Nahas, & Nawar, 2013). Relationships develop from communication (Conrad, 2014) and leaders who use effective communication skills improve employee motivation (Nwagbara, Smart Oruh, Ugorji, & Ennsra, 2013). Glavas and Godwin (2013) suggested that leaders should share and respond to employees in adequate time while providing clear communication. Conversely, ineffective communication results in organizational problems (Conrad, 2014). Leaders recognize the relevance of applying leadership skills to develop successful leaders and apply appropriate leadership style in practice (Meng & Berger, 2013). Conrad shared that leaders are responsible for the flow of communication across the organization.

Participants for this study shared their experience in regards to receiving performance reviews for work productivity. Jain (2014) defined performance review as an investment for the company and is the process of obtaining, analyzing, and recording information about the relative worth of employees to the organization. Performance appraisals enable organizations and employees to define, communicate, and review expectations, goals, and progress in achieving strategic objectives (Dusterhoff, Cunningham, & MacGregor, 2014). Recognizing employees' performance can be an efficient source of motivation requiring organizational skills to achieve excellent results (Hikmah, 2015).

Consistent with the findings from this study regarding workplace communication and organizational outcomes, Hikmah (2015) recommended that effective communication within organizations is necessary to regulate the role of the organization, regulate coordination from leader to employee, and employee to leader. Additionally, research conducted by Richardson and Taylor (2012) regarding employee interdependence being a necessity for employees to interact in advance communication is consistent with the recommendations of Hikmah. A total of 4/20 participants (20%) shared their experience regarding extending or receiving electronic recognition.

According to participants' feedback, leaders extended recognition via email and employees received recognition through means of technology; however, Hastings and Payne (2013) noted that scholars have begun to explore the implications for miscommunication through email, and misinterpretation of a sender's intent could have profound implications. Conversely, Garcia, Castillo, and Duran (2012) argued that the Internet, including email, represents an opportunity for organizations to increase the scope and effectiveness of communication.

Table 3

Leader-Employee Communication

Nodes	No. of Participant Sources	% of Participant Sources
Written Acknowledgment ▪ Performance appraisal ▪ Certificates	15	75%
Electronic Recognition (Email)	4	20%

Theme 4: Motivational Recognition

Motivational recognition was a primary focus for all 20 study participants (100%). Hitka, Stachová, Balázová, and Stacho (2015) defined motivation as the process that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-oriented behavior, whereas changes in motivation depend on meeting employee needs. Specific nodes for Theme 4 that emerged through participants' responses included: (a) employee of the month, (b) vacation days, and (c) public recognition. Contents of Theme 4 evolved from interview questions 5 and 6.

Employee of the month. The purpose of the questions associated with this theme was to determine the types of recognition that motivated employees. Participant L-1 stated, "One of the things that I have in my unit is an employee of the month." Leaders documented and solicited validations from the entire unit with regards to who should be the next employee of the month. Participant L-1 also stated, ". . . my subordinates who are directly under me . . . and we make a decision on who's going to receive the honor." Once the team compiled a list of nominees, the leader conducted a round table discussion with team members and decided which employee would receive the honor. Once the leader and employees solidified the name of the employee, the leader recognized the individual as employee of the month. The employee received a plaque and a paid lunch as an extension of recognition and appreciation. Involving employees' decisions with regards to who would become the next employee of the month established an environment of inclusion, which motivated employees to increase performance in an effort to receive the next employee of the month recognition.

Vacation Days. When asked to detail the type of recognition that motivates employees to perform exemplary acts, Participant CE-1 indicated, "Now they do have the option to give us days off, comp days. Many of them do not do that because that cuts into our staffing and that would almost penalize other officers." Although leaders were satisfied with the various types of recognition they extended to employees for increased production, employees expressed a desire to receive awards such as paid vacation days, as per participants' responses, this type of reward received greater appreciation compared to receiving a plaque or write-up on a performance appraisal. Participants shared their concern that the target organization did not have available resources to reward all employees with this type of incentive. Johnson (2014) stated that offering incentives to law enforcement personnel for productivity might be worthless if leaders do not effectively recognize and reward these employees.

Recognition from the Public. Participant CE-5 expressed:

> Those thank you's from citizens or the people we help daily or that I may help. Not everybody but just those few thank you's or you know the appreciation of

> those that I come in contact with. Those members of the community, and that's really my motivation at this point.

Participant CE-3 expressed, "For me personally I like recognition from the public, just like a kind word or something like that. I don't have to have a plaque or certificate or anything like that."

Award Effectiveness. All 20 participants (100%) were stimulated by some form of motivational recognition. Although leaders are pleased with the type of awards they extended to employees, there was a great desire by employees to receive awards with more meaning. Considering the nature of law enforcement employees and the risk they take each day, employees felt unappreciated for their work and when they received recognition for increased productivity, the gesture was a sign of respect, rather than sincere appreciation.

Receiving awards motivates police officers (Oberfield, 2014). Conversely, French and Emerson (2014) argued that public employees, such as police officers, are motivated by a desire to promote the public interest, to improve society, and to create change in the community. Consistent with results of the study conducted by Lefton (2012) regarding how meaningful recognition influences organizational outcomes and results regarding motivational recognition, Daneshkohan et al. (2015) defined job motivation as the willingness to exert and maintain an effort toward organizational objectives.

Oberfield (2014) noted that employees' loyalties, identities, and motivations linked to how employees perform on the job. Public organizations, such as police departments introduce change and innovation to form satisfying work environments and increase employee productivity (Nalla & Kang, 2012). In a study conducted by Nalla and Kang (2012), the researchers identified two common measures of police job satisfaction: officers' attitudes and officers' states of mind that results from individuals' needs and values. Job satisfaction in law enforcement agencies has both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects (Kula & Guler, 2014). Extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction involve salary and promotion; whereas, intrinsic aspects include employees working with citizens, organizational support, personal needs of recognition, and accomplishment (Kula & Guler, 2014). Nalla and Kang also claimed that only motivation factors, such as achievement and recognition, cause job satisfaction. Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, and Suklan (2015) indicated that employees' levels of motivation influences the effectiveness of performing a certain task in the workplace. A positive relationship exists between individual performance and organizational performance (Kula & Guler, 2014). Law enforcement leaders must be aware that the level of success of any law enforcement agency depends on the well-being of the agency's employees (Kula & Guler, 2014).

Motivation comes from a wide range of personal or social factors, such as recognition by leaders or personal satisfaction resulting from personal achievement (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015). Nonfinancial incentives may lead to enhanced performance from police officers considering law enforcement officers pursue public service employment to fulfill personal goals and needs (French & Emerson, 2014). Job satisfaction can result from achievement, verbal recognition, challenging tasks, and promotion (French & Emerson, 2014).

Table 4

Motivational Recognition

Nodes	No. of Participant Sources	% of Participant Sources
Leaders and Employees Who Feel Recognition is a Motivational Tool	20	100
Employee of the Month	2	10
Vacation Day	2	10
Public Recognition	2	10

Theme 5: Positive Leader-Employee Relationship

In response to interview question 9, participants shared their experiences regarding the leader-employee relationship when leaders recognized employees for increased productivity. Findings from this study indicated that leaders and employees possessed a positive and professional relationship when leaders extended recognition to employees. Nodes for Theme 5 were: (a) positive relationship, (b) business relationship, and (c) respect.

Positive relationship. Theme 5 encompassed information relevant to the relationship employees shared with leaders when leaders extended recognition. Consistent with study results conducted by Perry et al. (2010) regarding an employee's immediate leader as one of the most influential people in that person's life, participant E-6 shared:

> A good relationship. We consider her like a mother of the group, yeah we do. I would say the majority of our unit are younger officers, like myself – a lot of the older ones are retiring. So it's more than younger officers, so we kind of see her like the mother of the group.

The manner in which leaders and employees relate to each other has a considerable amount of influence on organizational outcomes (Shweta & Srirang, 2013). Participant L-10 stated, "It's a positive relationship because it shows the employee that they are supported, and when they have the support and backing of not only the supervisor but the department it make a huge difference." A clear mutual interdependence exists between both the organization and employees; whereas, both parties have an influence on each other's potential in achieving success (Sokro, 2012).

Participants reported that sharing a positive relationship with leaders and employees within the organization creates an environment of motivated employees. When employees demonstrated positive behaviors and attitudes while on the job, work was enjoyable. Employees who associated with positive individuals developed a trust and mutual respect for each other, which also created a positive and enjoyable working environment. Creating a bond with other employees within the organization or individuals on the same team may be beneficial to completing tasks, solving cases, or simply offering general support.

Business relationship. Participant E-2 offered, “A professional relationship I must say. When someone is being recognized be it myself or anyone else, it’s strictly professional.”

Likewise, participant L-6 reported:

> The majority of my relationships are really professional. I mean there is no different relationship with employees that I recognize for their performance and those that I consider friends. So I don’t see any different relationship with those that I recognize, other than that they are appreciated for their work or appreciated being recognized for their work.

Participants’ responses revealed that the majority of their relationships with other employees within the organization are professional. Participants’ responses also concluded that if employees received recognition from their leader, they had a positive leader-employee relationship.

Respectful relationship. Participant L-10 shared**,** “I think there’s overall respect for one another.” In the words of Participant L-1, “So I think there’s a respect, I think that there’s a sense that they want to emulate what you do.” Participant L-2 expressed,

> Regardless if they performing at the highest level or they’re mediocre – the way that I treat them is not going to change. I’m still going to praise them or some of the things that they are doing well and coach and mentor them on the things that they need to do better with.

Leader participants did not feel that the relationship they shared with an employee influenced how they recognized that employee. Participants' responses revealed that leaders were consistent with regards to how they treated employees during the course of business hours. Several participants reported that they shared a positive leader-employee relationship. A few employees felt that a positive leader-employee relationship was a contributing factor and beneficial for those employees when leaders extended recognition. If employees do not have a good relationship with their leader, those employees may not receive full recognition for increased productivity.

Law enforcement scholars revealed through studies on leadership in police organizations that police officers desire leadership and organizational support to enhance their commitment (Indrayanto, Burgess, Dayaram, & Noermijati, 2014). Nalla and Kang (2011) described a police organization as an environment that represents officers' relationships with their leader and other officers. Employees who commit to their organization provide positive outcomes, including law enforcement agencies (Johnson, 2015). Ingram (2013) reported that researchers devoted a considerable amount of time to comprehend occupational attitudes of police officers.

Employee performance is directly affected by the relationship employees share with their leader and leader's attitude toward employees (Nalla & Kang, 2011). An employee's immediate leader can exert a compelling influence over employee behaviors and work productivity (Johnson, 2011). Leaders who develop an effective relationship with their employees by offering supervisor guidance, monitoring, and feedback, influence positively employee productivity (Johnson, 2011). Concurrently, employees who communicate effectively with their leader are likely to build a positive relationship with their superior, enhance work performance, and contribute to organizational productivity (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012).

Leaders are a prime component of supportive management to enhance employees' commitment, and leaders need to offer organizational support and motivation (Indrayanto et al., 2014). Densten conducted a study in 2003 (as cited in Indrayanto et al., 2014) on police officers and found that employees who receive precise directions from leaders are likely to execute effectively job duties and have a higher level of job satisfaction than employees who do not receive clear directions from leaders. Within officers' organizational environment, leaders are meaningful influences in general as well as police officers' attitudes in particular (Ingram, 2013). Leaders are influential and demonstrate useful sources of support; therefore, leaders have greater ability to promote positive motivational states in employees (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

Ten of 20 participants (50%) stated that they possessed a positive relationship with their leader or employees at the time employees received recognition.

Table 5

Positive Leader-Employee Relationship

Nodes	No. of Participant Sources	% of Participant Sources
Positive Relationship	10	50%
Business Relationship	4	20%
Respectful Relationship	4	20%

Relationship of Findings to the Conceptual Framework

LMX was the conceptual framework that underpinned this study. In the literature review of this study, contents included how high-quality relationships contribute to higher-level performance. Individuals characterize high-quality LMX relationships by mutual liking, trust, respect, and reciprocal influence between leaders and their employees (Zacher et al., 2014). Main themes in LMX theory are the relationships shared between leaders and employees, and how high-value relationships contribute to increased productivity (Carlson et al., 2011). In 2007, Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (as cited in Ingram, 2013) conducted a study of Australian police officers and found that officers who perceived that they had a quality relationship with their leader concerning support, trust, and respect reported lower levels of job dissatisfaction. Police officer participants of the aforementioned study expressed that receiving recognition, performance feedback, and the opportunity to engage in decision making are critical factors leaders should implement that enhance leader-employee relationships and organizational commitment (Crow, Chang-Bae, & Jae-Jin, 2012). Concurrent with Brunetto and Farr-Wharton's study, Morris et al. in 1999 (as cited in Nalla & Kang, 2011) reported that high-ranking police officers received high-quality support from their leader, whereas low-ranking officers received less organizational and leader support. Four of the themes prescribed in this study revealed a tie to the conceptual framework: (a) employee motivation, (b) leader-employee communication, (c) motivational recognition, and (d) positive leader-employee relationship.

Theme 1, employee motivation and Theme 4, motivational recognition addressed components of recognition that motivated employees to increase productivity. Although many people are satisfied with their jobs overall, they are not completely pleased with all aspects of their jobs, such as coworkers and leaders (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Findings of this study supported that leaders extended recognition to employees for increased productivity; however, as indicated in Theme 2, ineffective leadership, 3/20 participants (15%) expressed that the recognition was infrequent, 2/20 participants (10%) indicated that recognition was ineffective, and another 2/20 participants (10%) reported that recognition was inconsistent. Participants' responses revealed that employees who have a positive relationship with their leaders displayed a higher level of appreciation for recognition they received and employees are motivated to increase productivity. Particularly in assessing participants' responses, the frequency of recognition leaders extended needs further improvement. Shweta and Srirang (2013) argued that results of LMX include enhanced productivity, which augments organizational success. All 20 participants (100%) expressed that awards were a motivational factor that promoted increased productivity. Additionally, 8/20 participants (40%) had strong opinions that verbal recognition was an appreciated and motivational means of recognition.

Theme 3, leader-employee communication included communication effectiveness regarding employee recognition. Technology is taking a leading position in supporting communication in organizations in which tools, such as email, are becoming omnipresent (Pazos, Chung, & Micari, 2013). Fifteen of 20 participants (75%) indicated that they received recognition in written format. Four of 20 participants (20%) reported that they extended or received recognition via electronic communication, such as email. Email plays an increasingly prominent role in how organizations conduct business, and organizational leaders use this type of workplace connectivity during employees' work hours and after normal business hours (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015). Theme 5, positive leader-employee relationship entailed information regarding the types of relationships that existed when employees received recognition. A notable description in explaining the influence of leaders on employees is the quality relationship between leaders and the employees they influence (Neubert, Wu, & Roberts, 2013). Ten of 20 participants (50%) stated that they had a positive relationship with their leader or employee, 4/20 participants (20%) had a business relationship, and another 4/20 participants (20%) had a respectful relationship with their leader or employee when the leader extended recognition.

Relationship of Findings to Existing Literature on Effective Business Practice

Assessing and identifying skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity is common in research. An immense amount of research in the leader literature revealed the importance of leadership at various levels within organizations and the influence leaders have on the organization's success (Eissa, Fox, Webster, & Kim, 2012). Leadership practices are convergent considering technological breakthroughs regarding communication and the accommodation of management training (Hoffman & Shipper, 2012). To enhance knowledge, skills, and motivation that enable leaders to exercise positive influence toward employees, leaders need to obtain necessary skills to be effective (Eissa, et al., 2012).

Haines and St-Onge (2012) identified skills that could assist leaders in implementing recognition procedures to increase employee productivity, such as performance management training and multisource feedback. Performance management training requires leaders to participate in an ongoing process regarding performance planning, coaching, assessment, and review. Performance management training could improve how leaders extend recognition and overall work productivity effectiveness. Participation in the performance management training system enables leaders to provide multisource feedback. Multisource feedback allows individuals to provide feedback from various perspectives. Within the multisource system, leaders and subordinates provide feedback. Both approaches link to increased productivity (Haines & St-Onge, 2012).

Providing ongoing feedback to employees that assists in increasing work performance is a key component of employee motivation, likewise, from employees' perspectives, receiving feedback regarding performance is a positive and motivating experience (Mone, et al., 2011). Leaders endorse employee motivation when they provide recognition to increase performance; however, whether or not feedback minimizes feelings of engagement or offer additional encouragement to become motivated is unclear (Mone, et al., 2011). Prior to 2012, researchers found that 80-90% of organizational leaders felt that their performance management or recognition practices did not improve work productivity (Haines & St-Onge, 2012). Although several researchers explored the technical or measurement issues linked to employee performance, few researchers addressed the practices that might increase effectiveness (Haines & St-Onge, 2012). Conversely, researchers provided evidence that leadership development programs, such as feedback systems and formal training, can assist leaders in adopting better leadership practice skills that favorably influence employees' productivity (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014).

Employee Motivation, Recognition, and Rewards

Bjugstad et al. (2006) identified three conditions that need to occur for employees to exhibit high motivation levels: (a) confidence, (b) leader trustworthiness, and (c) gratification with the outcomes they receive. According to Kowalewski and Philllips (2012), rewarding and motivating employees were pivotal to organizations as employees are a critical resource for success. Additionally, leaders needed to motivate and reward employees to confirm employees were aware of their importance to the organization, which created increased productivity (Kowalewski & Phillips, 2012). Findings from this study revealed that 16/20 participants (80%) stated that they extended or received awards for employee performance. Job satisfaction and motivation are meaningful with respect to experiencing mastery and gratification (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Purposeful recognition influences employee outcomes (Lefton, 2012); whereas, failure to recognize employee performance could lead to alienation (Islam, 2012).

Leader-Employee Relationship

The leader-employee relationship could determine whether an employee reaches objectives (Cole, 2011). Employees are the recipients of leaders' authority (Hernes & Braenden, 2012). Perry et al. (2010) argued that the relationship employees have with their immediate leader might affect productivity. Empowerment of employees is the key to developing trusting relationships between employees and leaders. When employees are empowered, leaders should trust them to make rational decisions, and employees should trust leaders to provide the information and support to make the right decision (Scheers & Botha, 2014). Differing from the predictions of Sheers and Botha (2014), Nasser and Saadeh (2013) argued that an employee's position determines empowerment of leaders and employees and the occupational structure of power they possess rather than their work relationships. Eighteen of 20 participants (90%) expressed that they had a business, positive, or respectful relationship with their leader or employees.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders make employees aware of expectations and extend acknowledgment and rewards when individuals achieve goals, as transactional leaders focus on in-role performance rather than the incentive of new activities (Pieterse et al., 2010). Although 18/20 participants (90%) had a positive relationship with their leader or employees, 3/20 participants (15%) indicated that recognition was infrequent, 2/20 participants (10%) reported that recognition was ineffective, and another 2/20 participants (10%) stated that recognition was inconsistent. Consistent with the findings of this study, Ertureten et al. (2013) argued that under transactional leadership, employees receive rewards for accomplishing goals and leaders identify the rewards they will extend to employees if employees fulfill the requirements.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore skills leader used to implement recognition procedures to increase productivity. The literature review included an analysis on topics, such as LMX theory, the relevance of employee recognition, employee motivation, employee rewards, leader-employee relationships, and transactional leadership. The data collected from 20 participants employed by a police department located in southwestern North Carolina provided perspectives regarding the effectiveness of employee recognition, and skills leaders used to increase productivity. The themes that emerged from participants’ responses could serve as a training tool as the themes highlight specific areas leaders need to improve to implement recognition procedures. Contents of this study enhanced existing literature on the topics of employee recognition, employee motivation, employee rewards, leader-employee relationships, and transactional leadership. The findings of this study may enable leaders to improve business practice considering study contents included the areas leaders need to improve to implement recognition processes and skills leaders need to enforce the implementations.

With regard to Theme 1, employee motivation, 16/20 participants (80%) reported recognition, such as awards, verbal recognition, and employee of the month were motivational factors that could aid employees to increase productivity. The aforementioned motivational factors were skills participants shared in their responses that could increase employee productivity. Contents within Theme 5, leader-employee relationship, revealed 18/20 participants (90%) indicated that they had a good relationship with their leader or employees resulting in a high-level of appreciation for recognition. Although most participants reported having good relations with their leader, 7/20 participants (35%) described recognition as infrequent, ineffective, and inconsistent as noted in Theme 2, ineffective leadership. Effective leader skills and high morale of employees do not determine leaders’ relations with employees, rather the amount of power leaders have in the organization determines leaders' relations with employees (Nasser & Saadeh, 2013).

I explored methods regarding how leaders extended employee recognition and Theme 3, leader-employee communication, included the discussion of how leaders and employees communicated the extension and receipt of employee recognition. Communication is instrumental to organizational sustainability and growth (Christensen, 2014). Organizations continue to make big investments to build communication technology to facilitate employee communication and to increase employee performance

(Zang & Venkatesh, 2013). According to Theme 3, over half (75%) of participants noted that they offered or received recognition in written form, and 4/20 participants (20%) reported that they communicated recognition electronically. Leaders are recognizing the relevance of enhancing internal communication with employees, which is critical for developing a culture of transparency between leaders and employees (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Developing a sense of community and trust via internal communication entails establishing and maintaining relationships between leaders and employees (Karanges, Beatson, Johnston, & Lings, 2014), which could be a skill leaders use to implement recognition procedures.

Theme 4, motivational recognition, encompassed the types of recognition leaders extended that motivated employees to increase productivity. Motivating employees to increase productivity has become crucial in organizations today in comparison to the past, and employee motivation is imperative considering there is a direct relationship between motivation and productivity (Ahiabor, 2013). All participants (100%) shared that receiving recognition was motivational. In particular, 6/20 participants (30%) indicated that extending or receiving incentives, such as: employee of the month, vacation days, or public recognition was motivational. Ahiabor (2013) defined incentives as things that motivate individuals to perform an action and categorized as compensation incentives or recognition incentives, which includes thanking employees, praising employees, presenting employees with a certificate of achievement, or announcing an accomplishment in a public setting. Contents that comprised of Theme 4 revealed that employees were motivated when team members shared their work amongst each other and employees informed how well other team members are performing. Recognizing and sharing employees' achievements with other employees is a practice skill leaders could use to increase productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Implications of this study for social change entailed offering leaders within the law enforcement industry insights regarding skills leaders use to motivate employees and the types of recognition that motivate employees. As discussed in Themes 1 and 4, leader participants exercised their authority and employee participants expected to receive recognition for the duties they performed. Comparative to the research conducted by Zhang et al. (2012), employees who received recognition for a job well done were motivated to perform additional tasks than employees who viewed recognition as ineffective or infrequent. Social change might transpire when leaders provide ongoing feedback and recognition to employees that contribute to increasing productivity (Mone et al., 2011). When leaders deliver favorable feedback, leaders inform employees of their good standing regarding job performance, whereas if the feedback is relevant, specific, and detailed, the information could assist to improve productivity (Mo, Burlacu, Truxillo, James, & Xiang, 2015). Study participants offered tangible and intangible examples of motivational recognition.

From the data of this study, relevant themes emerged that could be advantageous to assist leaders with identifying skills leaders use to develop recognition procedures that increase productivity. Participants from this study defined verbal recognition, effective communication, and positive leader-employee relationship as skills leaders could exercise to implement recognition procedures that increase employee productivity. Additionally, applicable themes could be useful in identifying the types of recognition that motivate employees to increase job performance. Findings from this study indicated that receiving recognition was normally a positive and motivating experience, which aligned with findings from Fakhar Zaman et al. (2013) regarding employee motivation. A person with a high level of motivation possesses positive feelings toward their job and increases their work performance (Fakhar Zaman, Nas, Ahmed, Raja, & Khan, 2013).

Recommendations for Action

The relevant connection between recognition and job performance is imperative regarding increasing productivity (Seyed Rahim & Abu Daud, 2013), and employee motivation toward job performance plays a key role in the success of an organization (Verma & Verma, 2012). Motivated employees who find their impulses fulfilled in their occupations are willing to increase their work performance (Becchetti, Castriota, & Tortia, 2013). Current researchers view employee motivation differently than past researchers. Researchers explained employee motivation as individual tendency to drive their inner force to accomplish personal and organizational goals, whereas in the past, researchers explained motivation to be the will to achieve an inner force to gratify an unsatisfied need (Verma & Verma, 2012).

Findings from this study were added to existing literature and provided insight on the importance of leaders extending recognition to keep employees motivated resulting in increased productivity. Participants identified communication skills as the primary skill leaders should possess with regard to conducting business within the organization. Communication skills are necessary and a transferable job skill leaders and employees can possess, whether face-to-face or electronic. Effective communication skills within the organization are imperative for the success of the organization to include extending recognition to employees. Although few participants expressed their experience with infrequent and ineffective recognition and identified the need for improvement regarding leaders acknowledging employees, participants indicated that some leaders possessed encouragement skills. Leaders who exemplified this skill motivated employees to increase productivity and succeed in the workforce. Employees who had knowledge that leaders displayed concern with regard to employee performance worked above and beyond their assigned duties. Although participants identified skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity, 2/20 participants (10%) reported that their leader did not possess any skills regarding how to recognize employees, which could indicate that not all leaders possess skills to implement recognition procedures. Law enforcement leaders could use findings from this study to gain insight on skills leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase productivity. Shane (2012) argued that there is a possible connection between the way organizational leaders recognize employees and employees work behavior. Employee motivation and performance are the pivotal components in accomplishing the goals and objectives of any organization, whereas motivation levels affect employees’ performance and workplace behavior (Saleem et al., 2015).

Publication of this study might provide material scholars could use in future studies to bridge the gap between recognition and best practice skills leaders use to recognize employees. Publishing my finding in research journals, to include law enforcement journals, may enable leaders to gain knowledge, implement processes, and execute practice skills to develop recognition procedures that will increase productivity. Additionally, I will explore opportunities to present findings from this study to local, regional, and national forums, conferences, seminars, and business-related affairs. I will pursue law enforcement agencies for an opportunity to conduct leadership training on the relationship between recognition and skills from leaders' and employees' perspectives.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this qualitative phenomenological study entailed a purposive sample of 20 law enforcement employees, that consisted of 10 leaders and 10 employees. Opportunities for future research exist regarding training leaders should undergo to obtain skills that are beneficial to implementing recognition procedures. Additionally, the opportunity for future research exists for leadership training for leaders to understand the types of recognition that motivate employees. The results of this study illustrated the aforementioned, skills leaders used to recognize employees and specific types of recognition that motivated employees. The skills included: (a) communication, (b) encouragement, and (c) organizational skills. Motivational recognition entailed: (a) vacation or comp days, (b) awards, and (c) public recognition. The limitation for this study was there was not a comparison to other police departments. Although the research design used in this study was the phenomenological approach, the recommendations for further research included using a case study approach of police departments from different geographical regions to determine if the skills leaders use and the type of recognition that motivate employees are similar. Considering the implementation and execution of skills leader need to recognize employees would require leadership training, further research could study a group of leaders from various law enforcement agencies who implement specific skills to determine the level of effectiveness.

Reflections

During my enrollment at Walden University, the doctoral study experience and the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process were advantageous. Networking with faculty, staff, and classmates has created professional and personal relationships that will last for years. Staying connected with classmate scholars post the doctoral study journey and collaborating regarding our experiences and knowledge will continue to cultivate future ideas and suggestions I might explore. Prior to entering the doctorate program, and as a leader in corporate America, I developed a preconceived notion regarding how leaders should recognize employees for increased productivity and the type of recognition that influences employees to enhance their performance. After studying countless leadership styles and gaining an understanding of why leaders do what they do, according to the leadership style they demonstrate, I understand better why and how leaders recognize, or fail to recognize, employees for a job well done.

Data collection began by offering 20 law enforcement employees the opportunity to participate in a qualitative semistructured telephone interview. The interviews entailed 10 open-ended questions regarding recognition leaders extend to employees for increased productivity and the type of recognition that motivates employees. To deter any perceived or preconceived bias, I incorporated study participants who did not supervise others and leaders who supervised at least one employee. Additionally, at the time of the interview, study participants worked with the target organization for at least 1 year. Throughout the research process, I did not influence participants to speak one way or another regarding their experience with employee recognition, nor did I interject with comments during interviews. To ensure consistency across interviews, I followed the interview protocol.

The research process granted me insight into different skills leaders demonstrate when recognizing employees and the level of effectiveness of employee recognition. In the course of interviewing participants, I found their responses to be objective, and their openness to express their lived experience revealed how they feel about the recognition they received and areas needing improvement. The data collection, and in particular, the interview process, was an enjoyable experience, and I hope study participants gained an appreciation for the exploration of employee recognition.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore skills leaders used to implement recognition procedures to increase productivity. Twenty law enforcement employees from a police department in southwestern North Carolina participated in semistructured telephone interviews to explore this subject. The 20 participants included leaders, sworn officers and nonuniformed civilian employees who possessed at least one year of employment with the target organization, which enabled participants to have the knowledge to respond to the interview questions. For this study, there was no comparison with other police departments. The research question that guided this study was: *What skills do leaders use to implement recognition procedures to increase employee productivity?*

I employed Moustakas’s (1994) modified seven steps, originally designed by van Kaam, to analyze and code the data. Five themes emerged from the study findings: (a) employee motivation, (b) ineffective leadership, (c) leader-employee communication, (d) motivational recognition, and (e) positive leader-employee relationship. The themes included leader participants' descriptions regarding recognition they extended to employees for increased productivity and employee participants' descriptions regarding recognition they received for enhanced performance.

Findings of this study revealed that not all leaders use skills to recognize employees. Additionally, recognition that motivated employees included: (a) vacation days, (b) awards, and (c) public acknowledgment. Participant responses verified the need for leadership training that should enable leaders to implement recognition procedures to increase productivity. With proper leadership training, leaders may be able to develop skills that will enable them to implement recognition procedures. Following the implementation of recognition procedures, the goal would be to increase productivity. Findings from this study could be a blueprint for leadership training within law enforcement agencies or organizations seeking to strengthen their leaders to motivate employees.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions for leaders were as follows:

1. How do you recognize employees for increased productivity?
2. What skills do you use to recognize employees to help improve their productivity?
3. How do these skills influence how you recognize employees in your organization?
4. As a leader, what type of recognition do you extend to employees for good performance?
5. How do you motivate employees to perform exemplary acts?
6. What types of recognition motivate your employees?
7. What skills do you need to improve your ability to recognize your employees?
8. What is your experience regarding rewards and feedback you extend to employees for increased employee productivity?
9. What type of relationship exists between you and an employee when you recognize your employees for high performance?
10. What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to share?

The interview questions for employees were as follows:

1. How does your current leader recognize employees for increased productivity?

2. What skills does your leader use to recognize employees to improve productivity?

3. How do your leader’s skills influence how that leader recognizes you?

4. In your current role, what type of recognition do you receive from your leader for good performance?

5. What skills does your leader possess that motivate you to perform exemplary acts?

6. What types of recognition motivate you to perform exemplary acts?

7. What skills do your leader demonstrate that ensures employee performance is recognized?

8. What is your experience regarding recognition you receive for increased employee productivity?

9. What type of relationship exists between you and your leader when your leader recognizes you for high performance?

10. What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to add to this study?

Appendix B: Transcription Confidentiality Form

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: Virtual Solutions / [redacted]

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: Best Practice Skills Leaders Need to Recognize Followers to Increase Productivity I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: [redacted] **Date:** 2/27/15

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

[redacted]

March 31, 2015

Ms. Dimitra Cornelius

[redacted]

Dear Ms. Cornelius:

Major [redacted] has informed me of your doctoral dissertation research to explore best practice skills leaders need to implement recognition procedures to acknowledge employees for their organizational contributions that increase employee productivity. Your study, *Best Practice Skills Leaders Need to Recognize Followers to Increase Productivity*, would be conducted by interviewing random members of the [redacted] staff.

As requested, [redacted] Research & Planning Director [redacted] has through electronic means randomly identified 100 [redacted] staff members of the sworn and civilian staff for you to solicit participation to participate in your study.

As part of this study, I authorize you to:

- Invite employees to participate in your study
- Interview employees by asking open-ended questions regarding recognition they extend as a leader or recognition they receive as an employee
- Allow employees the opportunity to review responses for accuracy
- Share results with participants

Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. The [redacted] reserves the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Chief of Police

[redacted]

Appendix D: Semistructured Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
Selecting Participants	Participants: Purposeful Sampling. Researcher will contact participants by email or phone
Scheduling Interviews	Will schedule and conduct telephone interviews
Explaining the purpose of the research	The purpose of the study is to determine skills leaders use to recognize followers to increase productivity. Study participation is voluntary and individuals can withdraw from the process at anytime without penalty
Recording the Interview	In advance, thank you for your participation in this study. My name is Dimitra Cornelius, today's date is (day), (date), 2015. The time is approximately (time of day/EST). On the phone is (leader/employee participant name) who I will interview regarding my doctoral study topic: Skills Leaders Use to Recognize Followers to Increase Productivity. Repeat participant's name, do I have your permission to record the interview?

Interview Questions

The interview questions for **leaders** are as follows:

1. How do you recognize employees for increased productivity?
2. What skills do you use to recognize employees to help improve their productivity?
3. How do these skills influence how you recognize employees in your organization?
4. As a leader, what type of recognition do you extend to employees for good performance?
5. How do you motivate employees to perform exemplary acts?
6. What types of recognition motivate your employees?
7. What skills do you need to improve your ability to recognize your employees?
8. What is your experience regarding rewards and feedback you extend to employees for increased employee productivity?
9. What type of relationship exists between you and an employee when you recognize your employees for high performance?
10. What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to share?

The interview questions for **employees** are as follows:

1. How does your current leader recognize employees for increased productivity? **2.** What skills does your leader use to recognize employees to improve productivity? **3.** How do your leaders' skills influence how that leader recognizes you? **4.** In your current role, what type of recognition do you receive from your leader for good performance? **5.** What skills does your leader possess that motivate you to perform exemplary acts? **6.** What types of recognition motivate you to perform exemplary acts? **7.** What skills does your leader demonstrate that ensures employee performance is recognized? **8.** What is your experience regarding recognition you receive for increased employee productivity? **9.** What type of relationship exists between you and your leader when your leader recognizes you for high performance? **10.** What other lived experiences regarding recognition would you like to add to this study?	
Wrap-up interview	Thank you for your participation in this study. Is there anything else you would like to add?
a) Transcript Review **b) Member Checking**	a) Once I transcribe your interview responses, you can request to review your transcript for accuracy. b) Additionally, once I analyze the data, you can review my interpretation of the findings through member checking.